The Philosophy of the I Ching

by Carol K. Anthony

Second Edition, Expanded and Revised

Preface to the Second Edition

It is now 17 years since I wrote the original manuscript of this book. More experience, time, and hindsight have made me realize how this original work might be improved and made clearer.

It has occurred to me, looking back at the original book, how very difficult it is to explain the *I Ching*. While it has been the most central classic book of the Chinese culture, at its beginning over 5000 years ago, it was not a book. Having said this, it is not easy to understand that it is still so much more than a book. Other people who have consulted it regularly, as I have, have realized that it is also a teacher, and a way of looking at things. Rather than suggesting structured ways of relating to change, it shows us how to keep unstructured and adaptable in an optimal way. And then, of course, there are those who look at it as the source of their particular discipline: feng shui, acupuncture, a theory of art, a theory of war strategy, T'ai Chi, Taoism, and Confucianism; and there are those who have seen in it the structure of the Cosmos, the genetic code, and an explanation of chaos theory. Indeed, how' does one explain such a book?!

Just as I did not discuss many of these aspects of the *I Ching* in the original edition of this book, I do not try to do so in this edition. My focus, then as now, was on the ability of the *I Ching* to act as a teacher, and to explain the way of the Cosmos. I will share my experience of this, and the sorts of lessons I have been taught over the last 27 years, hopefully in such a way that the reader will be able to experience the teacher who speaks through the *I Ching* for himself.

As I explained in the first edition, there is a philosophy implicit within the hexagrams and lines of the *I Ching* that is reiterated again and again. This philosophy, in itself fascinating, is unlike the analytic philosophies of the West, which focus on explaining our material existence. The *I Ching* presents a philosophy that helps individuals relate meaningfully to the dynamics of life, as they are governed by an unseen Cosmic order. It then helps them to bring their attitudes and outlook into harmony with the preeminent Cosmic laws. It also explains that to be in harmony with the Cosmic Order is the same as being in harmony with one's original nature

It gives me pleasure to once again offer my little book to those who are open to it and who are interested in it. It is my hope that it wall help them, in some way', with their own lives, as the *I Ching* has helped me.

Naturally, in such an undertakings, many insights have come from the oracle voice of the *I Ching*. Others have also come from friends and acquaintances who have shared with me their experiences in learning from the *I Ching*. I thank one and all tor these wonderful gifts. I particularly thank Hanna Moog, expert editor on the *I Ching*, for her thoughts and editorial comments, which have been of great help in writing this second edition. I also thank artist Christel Burghard-Worfel for the cover art, which is taken from her larger work of embroidery on cloth. I also thank my daughter Leslie Carlson for the cover graphics and book design.

- Carol K. Anthony

1. The I Ching or Book of Changes: an Overview

The ancient Chinese book of wisdom, *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, is primarily a set of 64 six-lined configurations called hexagrams, that have, for at least 5000 years, been consulted as an oracle.

The hexagrams of the *I Ching* came from an ancient Chinese way of looking at the Cosmos as the invisible origin and counterpart of all visible things. Both the invisible and the visible make up the Cosmic whole. To understand the Cosmic Way, we must look beyond its outer aspects to its guiding inner principles. As Lao Tzu wrote: “So, as ever hidden, we should look at its inner essence: As always manifest, we should look at its outer aspects.”

The ancient Chinese, like the ancient Greek Pythagoras, saw numbers as mirroring the order of the universe. The number one represented the undifferentiated whole that was called T’ai Chi. Within this whole existed two primary forces called the Creative and the Receptive, symbolized by the numbers one and two, that by interacting with each other, brought about the creation of all things. The ancients imagined that everything that existed in the material world existed first in image form (an image that persons with psychic abilities could intercept just prior to their emergence). The emergence of the image into reality was made possible by the action of the Receptive force, which ‘received’ the image and nurtured it into being. Lao Tzu expressed this idea when he described the creation of things in terms of the interaction of the primary numbers one and two: “Tao gave birth to One, One gave birth to Two, Two gave birth to Three, Three gave birth to all the myriad things.” *(Tao Te Ching*, Verse 42).

The Creative and Receptive forces were observed to act as polar and paired complements, such as odd and even numbers, positive-negative energies, the male and the female, light and dark, cold and hot, and so on. The straight and divided lines of the hexagrams symbolized these pairs respectively. In their 64 different orderings, they were said to be capable of mirroring everything in the Cosmos. In time, the two forces of the Creative and the Receptive came to be called Yang and Yin.

In addition to being associated with image and idea, the Creative (Yang) was associated with the Sun and the outgoing light energy, and so it was also called the Heaven Cosmic energy. The Receptive (Yin) was associated with the Earth as bringing the material into existence, and therefore also with nurturing; its energy was seen as passive, but also absorbing and ingoing. Yang was seen as positive and Yin as negative, not in terms of good and bad, but as in physics, where positive and negative energies are evident at the opposite ends of a magnet. The power of the Sun, with its heat and warmth, were seen to be received by the Earth, which, with its dark soil, acts as a ‘womb’ that nurtures and brings forth all the things that grow upon it. The Creative came to be seen therefore, as the primordial father of all things while the Receptive came to be seen as the primordial mother of all things. They were symbolized in the prototypical star-pair, Fu Shi and Noo Kua, a constellation in the sky that pictured them with intertwined mermaid tails.

Unlike our Western tendency to see polarities as opposites and even as destructive to each other (as in the case of fire and water), the ancient Chinese saw all polarities as complementary and interactive, and as essential to the functioning of the whole. Fire and water, when brought into a complementary relationship, as happens when we put water in a vessel over a fire, was seen to produce energy. Movement and stillness, when brought into a complementary relationship, such as when one puts up a mast and sail to

catch the wind, results in a beneficial effect. Observing the complementarity of polarities led to this early form of the science of physics.

Having viewed numbers as sacred because of their ability to mirror the unity of nature, it was natural that the Chinese should see the chance development of either a Yang or Yin number as representing a sort of yes or no answer given by the Cosmos. From this primitive ability to obtain a yes or no answer through numbers, the more complex system of the hexagram oracle was built. The tossing of a coin to develop a yes or no answer is a very ancient custom even in our own culture, but we tend to forget this because the use of chance was historically associated with heresy and punished; it was also discredited by science as superstition. The Chinese, however, had a great respect for chance, seeing in it a way of putting their questions to the invisible Cosmic Consciousness. The single yes and no lines of Yang and Yin developed, in time, into a three-lined trigram oracle system that had eight possible combinations of yang and yin lines (For a more thorough discussion of this, see Chapter 9 of this book). The hexagram oracle developed when it was later observed that by casting six lines by chance means (tossing coins, or manipulating yarrow stalks to get yang and yin lines), two trigrams could interact with each to give much more sophisticated answers. It was possible to have 64 possible combinations of these lines, and each hexagram was seen to have a theme. This theme was derived from observing the way the trigrams reacted with each other, and also from considering the way the lines within the hexagrams affected each other. Thus developed the oracle we know today as *The I Ching or Book of Changes*. Since its inception, it has been consulted by some means of chance, particularly by the tossing of coins and the manipulation of yarrow stalks. (See Chapter 8.)

The Chinese saw the interaction of the Yang and Yin energies to be the ‘engine’ that drives the Universe. Their interaction was seen to drive the rotation of the seasons: The yang energy, manifested in the light of the sun, increases each month after the winter solstice to the summer solstice; at this point, in which Yang reaches its limit, and can no longer advance, the Yin force begins to advance, continuing to its maximum point at the winter solstice. Then the mounting of the Yang force begins as the sun once more ascends into the sky. Yang and Yin were thus seen as partners in the engine of change, each having its time of increase and decrease, each indispensable to the other and to the balance of the whole. That is also why they are seen to be two halves of a whole in the famous Yin/Yang circle.

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The hexagrams range in their patterns from the primary hexagrams of *The Creative (Heaven)* and *The Receptive (Earth),* in which the lines of the former are all Yang and those of the latter are all Yin, to all their possible combinations in the other hexagrams. These two hexagrams, being pure Yang and pure Yin, symbolize the two primal powers of the Creative and the Receptive. The two hexagrams are seen as dynamically arousing each other, and also as giving rise to all the other hexagrams.

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Each of the hexagrams are seen to have themes that describe a particular dynamic that is to be observed in the way the positive and negative energies flow through the six lines of the hexagram structure. The names of the hexagrams reflect these dynamics by active words such as ‘holding together’ rather than ‘to hold together’, and ‘following’ rather than ‘to follow’, and ‘gathering together’ rather than ‘to gather together .

The way the lines were seen to move within the hexagram reflected, in the view of the ancients, the way

action, or change, moves in the existential world. By observing this activity, the person consulting the oracle could observe the way things moved in time, from their seed forms to their full development. A person could see his whole situation reflected in the hexagram he developed by chance means. By perceiving the seed elements in his situation reflected in the hexagram, he could act, through its counsel, to bring his responses into harmony with the way the Cosmos works, to beneficially influence the outcome of his situation. Eventually, the situations depicted in the hexagrams, and the counsel given to bring the seekers attitude into harmony with the laws of the Cosmos, were written down to become the book of wisdom we now know as *The I Ching or Book of Changes*.

Because of the wisdom of its counsel the *I Ching* came to be used not only as an oracle, but as a manual for character development both by the Confucians and the Taoists, the major philosophical systems of China. Both groups saw in it ways to concentrate *chi*, life's essential energy, so that they could embody within their persons the laws of the Cosmos. It thus came to be the principle book of wisdom for both traditions, essential for the development of character and culture.

Its Historic Significance

Although it is not the oldest Chinese document, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* was formed in such antiquity that in the words of lulian Shchutskii, one of the foremost Western sinologists, "no other classical book can compete with it in chronological priority." Originating in an ancient matriarchal culture, (The source here is Hanna Moog, researcher and expert editor on the I Ching, and Franciscus Adrian, Die SchuleJesIGing, Hintergrundwissen, Eugen Diedenchs Verlag. Munich, 1994.), it was revised 3100 years ago by King Wen and his son, the Duke of Chou (founders of the Chou Dynasty of China), and edited and annotated by Confucius 600 years later. Since Taoism heavily influenced Buddhism upon its entry to China, the *I Ching* was also held by Buddhists in high esteem. That is why, today, one can find not only the classic Confucian version of the *I Ching*, but also Taoist and Buddhist versions as well. Considering its influence on these three great thought-systems of China, it is no wonder that Shchutskii remarked, "We may call it the first book in the Chinese library."

For centuries, the classic Confucian texts were the basis of formal education, not only in China, but also in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and other countries that adopted the Chinese culture. Of these texts, Shchutskii stated that their influence "in philosophy, in mathematics, in politics, in strategy, in the theory of painting and music, and in art..." was fundamental, and so grounded in the *I Ching* that it is impossible to understand them without first undertaking a study of the *I Ching* itself. When I asked a Chinese businessman about the significance of the *I Ching* in today's Chinese culture, he replied without hesitation, "The Chinese culture *is* the *I Ching!"* It is so incorporated into the culture that there is no other way to describe its influence, he explained. Until very recently, every educated Chinese person had to memorize it. Both this businessman, and Japanese businessmen I met, confirmed to me that there still is an *I Ching* scholar, or 'Sage', in nearly every Chinese and Japanese community, to whom people may turn for help in its interpretation, and for consulting it on important matters.

Until the beginning of the 20th Century, the *I Ching* remained a mystery in the Western world. Some 19th Century translations were made, but while the translators were competent in the language, they failed to understand it, or why it was important. Richard Wilhelm, a German Protestant missionary, was the first to study the *I Ching* "from the standpoint of the Chinese themselves." He was guided by a "scholar of the old school, one of the last of his kind, who knew thoroughly the great field of commentary literature that had

grown up around the book in the course of the ages." (Shchutskii) Wilhelm's translation of the book into German appeared in 1924, making it possible for Westerners to use the book as it was used throughout the East. This translation, which appeared in English in 1950, as part of the Princeton University Bollingen Series, has been translated into many other languages.

During the relatively short time that the Wilhelm translation of the *I Ching* has been available in the West, it has generated enormous interest. The expansion of its influence is mostly due to the quality of Wilhelm's work, and to the many references to Chinese wisdom that it contains. Its popularity is also due to the prominence given it by Carl G. Jung, world famous psychoanalyst. His introduction to the English translation of Wilhelm's text helped make Westerners aware that the *I Ching* is one of the world's great books of wisdom.

Spurred by the success of Wilhelm's translation, a number of other translations of the *I Ching* have appeared, i.e., a Buddhist *I Ching* and a Taoist *I Ching*. Still others which have appeared are transliterations or adaptations of Wilhelm's text, rather than translations. Some other so-called *I Ching* texts are books which have merely imitated the format of the *I Ching* in its 64 hexagrams, in order to accommodate new and more superficial fortune-telling verses. These latter books have no relationship to the *I Ching*. Nor do they give any hint of the thinking and depth of ancient Chinese philosophy.

The word *Ching* simply means 'classic text', and is appended to the titles of all classic Chinese texts, e.g., the *Tao Te Ching* and the *Shu Ching*. The name of the *I Ching* is really *I*, or *Chou I,* because King Wen of the Chou Dynasty compiled and enlarged existing materials into the text that became classic throughout Asia.

The original meaning of *I*, according to Wilhelm, was "lizard," but in particular the chameleon, symbolizing changeability and easy mobility. This meaning was merged with another visually similar character that meant command, as in the banner of a commander, or a command granted by a feudal lord to his vassal. This added the concept of constancy to the word, for constancy was seen to exist in the relationship between that which is higher to that which is lower, not only in terms of the trust granted, but also in terms of the loyalty of the vassal. The word also contained the idea of the sun and moon, as symbolic of the two fundamental forces of change called Yang and Yin, as well as the immutable Cosmic laws governing change called the *Tao*. All these implications were summed up by an early commentary Wilhelm quotes: "The name *I* has three meanings: These are the easy, the changing, and the constant."

Wilhelm describes *the easy* as an uncomplicated simplicity of mind. This simplicity, he says, is the starting point for understanding and attaining clarity. "We miss the meaning of this system if at the outset we look for something dark and mysterious in it." He adds, "The situations depicted in the *Book of Changes* are the primary data of life—what happens to everybody every day, and what is simple and easy to understand." Wilhelm calls this simplicity the "gateway" to understanding it. Clarity is symbolized by the brightness of the banner, which during the dust of battle can be seen and followed. What we see with clarity is easy to follow. In consulting the *I Ching*, we attain the clarity needed to guide us through the confusing times in our lives. Attaining clarity also leads to constancy of character that is in harmony with the Cosmic laws that govern life. Through attaining this constancy, our life's purpose is fulfilled.

Wilhelm describes *the changing* as an externally dynamic process through which a person may develop his perspective and realize the meaning of life. To resist movement, to barricade ourselves against the natural flow, is to miss the opportunity to free ourselves from the domination of the ego, thereby to develop and bring to maturity our true selves. "To stand in the stream of this development is a datum of

nature; to recognize it and follow it is responsibility and free choice.”

The third element, *the constant*, also implies the secure, as in security from danger, and from misfortune. “Safety is the clear knowledge of the right stand to be taken, security in the assurance that events are unrolling in the right direction.” Such security also comes from consistency in following our inner truth. Indeed, according to the *I Ching* there is no greater power or security than that attained through enduring in harmony with the Cosmic Laws.

All these characteristics imply the attainment of inner strength; that is to say, the self-command that occurs when we authorize our true natures. This self-authorization requires attaining self-knowledge through the guidance of the Sage. In learning from the Cosmic teacher, the student learns to follow his inner truth and thus maintains his harmony with the Cosmos.

The word Tao, in addition to referring to the Cosmic laws, refers to the path the individual follows that is in harmony with these laws. The word *I*, in its meaning of “the easy,” refers to the ease with which one may go through life, once one is in harmony with the Cosmic laws of cause and effect. Thus it is said in the *I Ching* that the person who is in harmony with heaven (the Cosmos), draws to himself its beneficence, protection, and help for everything that he does.

The Books that Comprise the *I Ching*

The *I Ching* is composed of three books. Book I, with its 64 sections, is the original *Chou* /, or divinatory manual. These sections are based on 64 different six-lined figures called hexagrams. With their accompanying explanations, the hexagrams comprise the working part of the book that is consulted by means of chance. Each of the hexagrams spell out what the ‘Superior Man’ (whose actions are in accord with Cosmic Law) would do in that circumstance.

Book II is a collection of commentaries, thought by Wilhelm to be of the Confucian school. Wilhelm stated that this book “intended to disclose the material out of which that world of ideas [expressed in Book 1] arose."

Book III is a sort of glossary. Researcher Iulian Shchutskii says of this book, “They are rather a collection of quotations from various authors whose names were not preserved,” and they are “commentaries, not the basic text.” Like Book II, Book III was added to the original text.

The Traditional Use of the *I Ching*

From the beginning, the 64 hexagrams of the *I Ching* have served as an oracle through which the seeker of wisdom can consult the Cosmos itself, or, as its voice is called, the Great Sage (In Chinese philosophy there is the saying that the Universal Teacher, or Great Sage, is at work in our lives, whether we use the I Ching or not.). In Book II of the *I Ching* it is said that the ancient sages, through meditation, assigned meanings to the hexagrams and their appended lines in such a way that all possible situations could be reflected.

For many centuries, the *I Ching* was available to the public through “street sages” who gave people

readings on their particular problems. These Sages had made the *I Ching* their particular study, and were presumed to be able to interpret it charismatically and intuitively. For the most part, they used the *I Ching* for fortune-telling purposes. The *I Ching* also served as the main text a man studied if he wished to become a scholar for the empire, or to pass the examinations to become a mandarin—one of the many bureaucrats who ran the offices of the Empire, and who traveled through the land to do the Emperor's business.

It is my view that *I Ching* has a modern purpose that is quite different from these traditional uses. Since it is possible to communicate with the Cosmos directly through the *I Ching*, it seems to be a gift from the Cosmos to help us humans know our true selves, and the true nature of the Cosmos. For when consulted as a teacher, we are helped to liberate ourselves from the mistaken ideas we have adopted from our traditions that have caused us to doubt our true natures, and therefore to adopt the false personality of the ego. However, to do this requires a real earnestness on our part, for the language of the *I Ching* speaks to the inner feelings and to our inner knowing, rather than to the mind only, as we are accustomed to expect from teachers. We are required, therefore, to relearn how to learn, since we are accustomed to ruling out our feelings while learning, and that part of ourselves that knows things on the deepest level of our being.

The *I Ching* makes it clear, in a number of lines, that before seeking to be its student, the seeker needs to be sure of his motives and dedication. Taking it up to satisfy a mere intellectual curiosity to 'see what it is', or to use it as a means to promote himself, causes the oracle voice to retreat. We find, in that case, that we are merely talking to the ego in us, hearing what it wants, or expects, to hear. Through such experiences we learn that a serious use of the *I Ching* is in conflict with any form of arrogance or ambition. *The Judgment* of *Holding Together* (Hex. 8) says to the seeker: "Inquire of the oracle once again whether you possess sublimity, constancy, and perseverance; then there is no blame."

Receiving the second line of *Oppression (Exhaustion)* (Hex. 47) signals to the seeker that the oracle has recognized his sincerity: "The man with scarlet knee-bands is just coming." The commentary explains: "A prince... is in search of able helpers." But, one is warned: "To set forth without being prepared would be disastrous, though not morally wrong." A dedicated study with the Sage is indicated.

A dedicated use of the *I Ching* does not mean that every question of what to do is put to the *I Ching*, as if we begin as a baby that has not yet learned to walk. In consulting it, we are not meant to abandon our commonsense. When we correctly understand the oracles answers, we find they are grounded in commonsense, supporting what we know, intuitively, and from our feelings. Performing the ordinary functions of life, such as getting out of bed, eating meals, and the like, are not ordinarily questions to be put to the Sage (There are cases where people have used the I Ching to determine when to get up, when to go to bed, and so on Their ego's ambition to be perfect leads them into many blind alleys). When we do not understand an event, or when extraordinary events occur, the *I Ching*, in *Grace* (Hex. 22), points out that the intellect is insufficient, and that it is necessary to be more earnest, and to find help.

All questions of doubt reflect the presence of inner conflict. Conflict occurs when, although we intuitively know the answer, our intellect has overpowered this knowledge with its rationales. The / *Ching* counsel resolves conflict by pointing out the underlying Cosmic logic. After hearing this logic, the intellect suddenly understands, as if to say, "Why didn't I see that? It's so simple."

Upon consulting the *I Ching*, the hexagrams we receive concern either the way we have related to the day's circumstances, or how we will need to adapt to upcoming events. The hexagram may confirm that we are in harmony, or suggest that some adaptation, or change in attitude, is needed. Often, the

recommended change consists of enlarging a narrow, subjective view, in which we see only two disagreeable alternatives, to a view that shows us the harmonious possibilities that can occur when we recognize that Cosmic help is available for the asking. In this context, the *I Ching* counsel supports what we know through our feelings, in contrast to the intellect, which has excluded them. Often, the counsel will call for a renewed open-mindedness that will allow the insights that validate our feelings. In this way, the *I Ching* counsel helps us to validate our inner feelings as a repository of inner truth that can be relied on. (See *Inner Truth*, Hex. 61) We are encouraged, through small steps of perseverance, to put trust in our inner truth. Thus we find that not only does following inner truth work, we attain inner peace and harmony.

Following inner truth is what the *I Ching* calls following the "way of Heaven." We find that because we are in harmony, all the Cosmic forces come to help us on our path. As the second line of *Increase* (Hex. 42) puts it, "Someone does indeed increase him; Ten pairs of tortoises cannot oppose it." The commentary to this line explains, "A man brings about real increase by producing in himself the conditions for it; that is, through receptivity to and love of the good. Thus the thing for which he strives comes of itself, with the inevitability of natural law. Where increase is thus in harmony with the highest laws of the universe, it cannot be prevented by any constellations of accidents." Keeping in contact with our inner truth and following it as the moment requires is quite the opposite to how the intellect operates, when it has separated from our feelings. It creates rigid and pre-structured solutions to problems.

When we first begin to consult the *I Ching*, we find that due to the exaggerated evaluation of the intellect given by our culture, our inner truth has been deeply repressed. The *I Ching* counsel re-establishes both a channel to our inner truth that enables us to hear it, and gives us a Cosmic point of view that justifies inner truth to our intellect. Frequently our distrust of inner truth is such that we find it difficult to detach from our structured approaches to problems long enough to enable inner clarity to appear. The idea of detaching from the mind in the middle of a stressful or ambiguous situation strikes fear in us. We feel pressured to 'know now,' and to 'act,' even when the right way is unclear. To prevent us from falling back on the old pre-structured answers, the *I Ching* counsels us to "persevere" until the right answer becomes clear. It thus helps us to withstand the pressures created by these compulsive fears and doubts, and we are alerted to times when the agitated and unreasoning elements in us threaten to undermine our perseverance. Consulting it daily helps us to acquire the inner peace we need to keep attuned to inner truth.

All the *I Ching* lessons require us to put aside our distrust long enough to give our inner sense of truth a chance to prove itself in the context of a real life situation. Each time we experience its truth and reliability, our inner truth becomes what the *I Ching* calls 'knowledge of the heart'. This knowledge is not a mental idea of the correct way to relate, it is an inner experience of its effectiveness. It is no longer a thinking or hoping that something is true, but a knowing it is. Through learning in this experiential way, a firm confidence in our inner truth is built in a step-by-step way. Each step prepares the next step, with no step being overleapt. Eventually our doubt and fear to follow inner truth is totally displaced.

Working with the *I Ching*, we find, does not have the aim of discrediting and discarding the intellect, but of making it a working partner with our inner truth. What is discredited is the false autonomy of the intellect, once it has been separated by the ego, from the knowing we have through our feelings. In time, the awareness that comes to us through this connection with our inner truth, and our trust in it, becomes firmly grounded in our way of life.

The Sage That Speaks through the *I Ching*

Several hexagrams define the Teacher whom we contact when we consult the *I Ching*. The fourth hexagram, *Youthful Folly*, calls this entity "the Sage," one who is capable of teaching us the workings of the hidden world. It specifies that it is we who must seek the Sage, and not the Sage who seeks us. This teacher is also referred to in *The Well* (Hex. 48), as a well whose clear, refreshing water is available to all who come, and who are willing to drink its water (put its counsel into action).

The water of the well also symbolizes the inner truth that resides in our innermost reaches of consciousness, and in our unconscious mind. It is implied, therefore, that in accessing our inner truth, we draw upon the wisdom of the Sage. Going to the well is symbolic of 'going within', as in contemplation and meditation. The depths of the well symbolize a place' where we may perceive the 'hidden world' where the Sage resides (A number of famous fairy-tales in the Grimm Brothers' collection have the well as a place through which the hidden world may be accessed). The image of the well as a place where wisdom and insight may be accessed is also a figurative reference to the hidden world that exists all around us, and which is visible to us only by being inwardly attuned and aware.

It is also said that to draw water from the well we must put our rope down far enough. This means that we are wholly sincere in our approach to the Sage. With a testing, indifferent, or doubtful attitude, "our rope does not go down far enough." It is also important that the jug for drawing up the water not be "cracked," otherwise all the water drains out. This means that if we doubt the value of the wisdom, it remains inaccessible to us, and we are deprived of its nourishing qualities. If, in approaching the Sage we seek only to confirm our fixed views, or to support ideas the *I Ching* regards as incorrect, or decadent, or if we are preoccupied with the trivia of external form, we drink "the mud of the well." If we seek help to further selfish aims, we "catch fishes." When it is not time to know the answers, or to achieve our goals, we are told, "the well (our well) is being lined." While the well is being lined, it cannot be used, but the work on refurbishing it will make it all the more useful later on.

The water of the well is also symbolic of our intuitive knowledge of all things. In some way or another the Sage and inner truth are one and the same thing. The treasure-chest of inner truth given us at birth is the great gift that we bring with us into this world from the Cosmic source. In the beginning we are consciously connected with it, but through conditioning this conscious connection becomes obscured. When we choose (usually at mid-life) to work on our self-development, it is necessary to re-establish and develop this connection. A person who undertakes this work no longer needs to look for the Sage without, because he restores the Sage within.

The well also symbolizes the universality of truth that lies, like a water-table, under all the wells of a community. Just as we can access nourishing water from the well if we approach it in the right way, we can likewise count on people to recognize and respond to what is universally true and just, if we approach them correctly. Truth, we soon find, is always refreshing and light. If an idea about human behavior is not universally applicable, for instance, it is not truth. If, on hearing something grim and dark we think, 'that can't be truth', it is not, for the perspective is as yet incomplete. A complete perspective always lifts off the burdens of doubt and fear. Both great and small perceptions have this quality.

The Sage who speaks through the *I Ching* defines itself in other hexagrams as "an expert in directing affairs," "a man of influence who has special abilities," "a guest who knows the secrets by which the kingdom may be made to flourish," "a ruler," "a prince who seeks able helpers," and "a helpful friend,"

in many other hexagram lines. The Sage is also referred to in the plural in some hexagram lines as "persons in retirement who may be sought for help in difficult matters, if we approach them modestly," but this may also refer to the suppressed and forgotten inner truth that lies dormant in others, that can be called on to help, through modesty, trust, and patience.

The Cosmology of the *I Ching*

Book II of the *I Ching* says that the source of all things is *T'ai Chi*, meaning 'oneness' and 'primal unity'. This primal source is also called the Void, or Container of the Universe. It is seen as changeless, timeless, and universal. It works in ways analogous to the way the human mind works, and the implication is there that the primal source of all things is the Cosmic Consciousness.

In the human mind a thought arises in the empty space; this thought gives rise to action. In the Cosmic Mind, the image arises. The arising of the image was seen by the Chinese as the action of Yang; therefore in the *I Ching*, Yang is called the Creative Still, it is only half of the complementary whole. Its other half is Yin, its opposite and complementary force, that in the *I Ching* is called the Receptive. The image offered by Yang is received and nurtured by Yin, bringing it into being. The spin-off of this interaction was seen as an ongoing Creation, and the ever-moving Wheel of Change.

In their complementarity, the openness and receptivity of Yin was seen to arouse Yang, while the straightforwardness and activity of Yang was seen to arouse Yin. This complementarity was made possible because the two forces come to meet each other halfway. In Western thought, opposites are seen to annihilate each other, but in Eastern thought, they are seen to arouse and complete each other. Transposed to nature, the outgoing Yang force of the Sun, expressed as light and warmth, arouses the dark, cold Yin action of the top soil of the earth, giving rise to all that grows upon it.

The creative and receptive powers of Yang and Yin are seen as forces in cyclical motion, ever changing and creating new conditions. This motion is set within the Void, which is seen as the origin and ultimate container of all things in their totality. The structure of the atom is a good analogy of the changing set within the unchanging. Electrons, neutrons, and other atomic particles revolve around a nucleus of matter within an envelope of empty space. The empty space is integral to the existence and structuring of the atom, as *T'ai Chi* is integral to the structure of existence.

All things in existence are said to demonstrate a preponderance of either Yang or Yin qualities. The following list is an example of things categorized as preponderantly Yang or Yin:

Yang	**Yin**
Image	Reality
Heaven	Earth
Odd numbers	Even numbers
Masculine principle	Feminine principle
Light	Dark

Human beings contain both primal powers in microcosm. Certainly, we have both masculine and feminine components in our natures. Through our intuition we have access to the inner, invisible world of the Cosmos (Yang); through our intellect we have access to the outer, material, evident world of earth and

nature (Yin). The structure of the hexagram reflects these relationships. For example, a hexagram is composed of six lines. The three bottom lines are said to be related to earth/the material world, and the three top lines to heaven (the Cosmos). The hexagram is also seen with the bottom two lines representing earth, the middle two human beings, and the top two heaven. It is said, consequently, that human beings, representing the middle lines, have a line in both the heaven and earth trigrams. This does not mean that all the other life forms do not likewise have this same position, even though that might be assumed. It is rather an analogy that shows that we contain within us both the forces of the light and the dark. *The Creative* (Hex. 1) explains that our ultimate destiny is to use this lifetime to complete, within ourselves through self-development, the true image of us stored in the consciousness of the Cosmos, from which we have emanated. It is nothing more, nor less, than becoming who we really are.

The Tao

Tao is a word that has no suitable Western counterpart. In Book II of the *I Ching*, it is said that at the dawn of consciousness we stand within preexisting systems of relationships that, in their totality, comprise the Cosmic Order. For example, the planets orbit around the sun, creating the seasons; the moon orbits around the earth, creating the tides; life on earth fits within these larger systems of relationships, for we can neither plant without regard to the seasons, nor navigate without regard to the tides. These natural, preexisting systems of relationships may be thought of as the Great Tao of the Universe, or Cosmic Consciousness, or Cosmic Will, or simply, 'the way things work'. The Tao of the Universe is seen to move in ways that are beneficial and harmonious to existence as a whole. The *I Ching* mirrors this ordering, thus mirroring the Great Tao, or Cosmic Will.

The interaction of the two primal forces, Yang and Yin, is also called the Great Tao of the Universe. Tao is also called the ridgepole of the universe, and the unifying principle. It is the ridgepole because it is firm—the immutable law that governs change. It can be seen as the Cosmic Will, with the Tao at work in human beings as human will. The ridgepole is seen as our will to follow our original, true natures, and to see the life process through to the end in a conscious willingness to be true to ourselves. *Preponderance of the Great* (Hex. 28) concerns the human ridgepole, or will to hold to our true natures during times of stress. This hexagram could be subtitled "Great Stress Preponderates," because we tend to draw it during times when our will to hold to our true natures is under stress. The ridgepole is said to "sag to the breaking point," when we are tempted to depart from it, or to give way to feelings of doubt and hopelessness. Another line refers to "bracing the ridgepole," meaning we have maintained our will and held firm to our inner truth, in spite of the danger of doubt. Similarly, lines in *Darkening of the Light* (Hex. 36) may indicate that our will to follow what feels good and harmonious is endangered by doubt and hopelessness; or we are responding to the temptation to give up, or have already done so. *The Abysmal (Water)* (Hex. 29) addresses the danger that occurs to our will when we have put forth great effort to achieve visible progress, and it appears that our efforts have been in vain. The great ridgepole of the universe, the Great Tao, can be seen as perfected will, firm in its way, always continuing the forces of regeneration, of life, and of change, in a harmonious way. The human challenge, given that humans have created the ego, through false assumptions and arrogance, is to bring ones personal will back into its original harmony with the Great Tao.

The Tao is the 'unifying principle' because it shapes the seemingly disparate elements into meaningful things, bringing order out of apparent chaos, harmony out of discord, and unity out of divergent trends of action. As such, the Tao is the 'theme' that underlies all seemingly unrelated events. If we look back at the

photographs of a 25-year-old, we see, in infancy and youth, the features of the adult; at no time, however, can we have seen the adult characteristics in the child. There exists in these photographs a theme that finds expression in the adult; this theme is another word for Tao. Sometimes, in finding the occupation that most fulfills us, we are amazed, in looking back at seemingly unrelated things we did, how important those things were to prepare us for what we do now. At any point along the way we might have said, "what I am doing is useless," but the theme has run through it all. It is similar to tacking a sailboat to make progress against the wind; first we head the boat in one direction, then in another, but we make process in one overall direction. Tao, as the unifying principle, gives meaning to our lives. This theme, however, is not predestination; rather, it is the unique capacity of the Tao to give unity to everything we have done, once we observe and adapt to its immutable laws. It is like a carpenter, joining the different shapes and sizes of wood into appropriate objects. Everything we do is capable of being constructively used by the Cosmos to return us to harmony. In every situation, the elements exist by which we may solve the most difficult problems; we need only be alert and open for them to become visible to us. It is said in the *I Ching* that in the hands of the Cosmos, everything is capable of finding a use. Applied to the relationship between the human being and the Cosmos, the second line of *The Ting* (Hex. 50) (The Ting is a vessel used for sacrifice. Figuratively, it refers to our inner container for Cosmic nourishment, which needs to be kept pure and free of contaminating ideas) say's, "...every person of good will can in some way or other succeed. No matter how lowly he may be, provided he is ready to purify himself, he is accepted. He attains a station in which he can prove himself fruitful in accomplishment, and as a result he gains recognition." The Tao knows how to make everything succeed.

Although we live in an external world in which things may be measured and defined, the Tao that governs change, arises in the hidden world that accompanies our existence. It may not be measured or defined. We may see it at work in all existence and develop an image of it, but our image is necessarily incomplete. The Tao is perceptible in the deepest reaches of our inner being, in our intuitive awareness, and in our undifferentiated knowledge of all things, our inner truth.

In using the *I Ching* regularly for self-development, we bring our intuitive knowledge of the Tao as the unifying principle into conscious awareness. This is accomplished through learning to "hold to what is essential and let go of the trivial," as it is put in *The Wanderer* (Hex. 56), line one. To do this we listen to the empty space within, where the origins of our thought processes are able to be perceived. We learn to "hold to what endures" (see *Duration*, Hex. 32), and to go down to the very wellsprings of our being to find the answers. *Enthusiasm* (Hex. 16), line two, counsels us to be aware of negative thoughts when they are in their germinal phase, and to intercept and thwart them. The Superior Man, these hexagram lines say, knows in advance the consequences that come from these seeds, therefore he withdraws from them "in time." In order to perceive the seeds of action and to know what is germinal, the *I Ching* teaches us to keep still in *Keeping Still, Mountain* (Hex. 52). Keeping still is counsel to meditate, for by becoming perfectly quiet and detached from our cares, we are able to find the empty space within where the seeds of our actions exist in our emotions as doubts, desires, and discontents.

Just as in navigating our way across the ocean we fix our position by referring to stationary points such as the North Star and the Sun, we learn to navigate our lives by finding reference points to principles that are constant and therefore endure. If we want to know what endures beyond all things, we find it in the empty space that lies between all things; it is out in the macrocosm of space, it is in the microcosm of the atom; it is in us. Empty space is the residing place of the Cosmos and the Tao, the Cosmic Consciousness, and the Cosmic Will. We need do no more than look within and listen within to connect with it. Lao Tzu said, "Few things under heaven are so instructive as the lessons of Silence, or as beneficial as the fruits of

Non-Ado." Elaborating on this principle, he said, "Thirty spokes converge upon a single hub; it is on the hole in the center that the use of the cart hinges. We make a vessel from a lump of clay; it is the empty space within the vessel that makes it useful. We make doors and windows for a room; but it is these empty spaces that make the room livable. Thus, while the tangible has advantages, it is the intangible that makes it useful."

The hexagrams of the *I Ching* reflect the workings of the Tao, or Cosmic Will, not only on the grand cosmic scale, but also in the lowliest life circumstance. By consulting them we intercept the images before they become reality; this allows us to end a prospective fate by adapting to the demands of the time. The hexagrams we receive in the chance throwing of coins give us a cross-section of all the tangents of change created by our inner attitudes. Emphasized in the *I Ching* are the far-reaching effects that our attitudes have on others, and how these attitudes either draw beneficial forces from the hidden world to what we do, or repel such forces.

Fate, in the *I Ching* is the negative trajectory of events that results from disharmonious elements in our attitudes. If, however, our attitude is in harmony with the Cosmic Will, of which our true inner nature is but an emanation, our lives are guided by beneficial influences, because the great Will of the Cosmos always acts in a beneficial way. If, however, our attitudes are out of harmony, we are also in opposition to the Cosmic Will. In this respect, the Tao is synonymous with the natural law. Misfortune is the natural consequence of being out of harmony with natural law. In the *I Ching,* such misfortunes are seen as "attacks of chance." It is my understanding, however, that the Cosmos, which is totally harmonious and beneficial, does not attack anything. Rather, these misfortunes are the natural effects of being out of harmony with our true natures, and therefore also outside the natural laws that govern our existence. The consequence of going against the natural laws is misfortune, just as going against the laws of physics, as in trying to fly without wings, results in falling. Fates thus are the consequence of ignoring what we inwardly know to be correct. The *I Ching* also makes us aware that a hostile fate is negated when we correct the disharmonious attitudes that caused it.

It is part of the natural law to equalize extremes. A haughty, pretentious attitude stands like a narrow, steep mountain that is constantly being attacked and eroded by the elements. A receptive, modest attitude is like a valley that receives all that erodes into it. As Lao Tzu noted, to be empty is to receive; to be full is to suffer loss. Because modesty proceeds from emptiness (freedom from all pretense), it is always in harmony with the forces of nature. To counteract a hostile fate, it is essential to return to our natural modesty. Perfect modesty, thus, is seen to lie between the two extremes of the mountain and the valley, being neither more nor less than our true selves. The *I Ching* likens modesty to a mountain that has eroded and filled up the valley, thus become a plain. This change is brought about by self-development, by which we consciously rid ourselves of elements we have adopted that are too much, such as pretense and Vanity, and fill in that which is too little, such as lack of self-esteem and inner worth.

This self-development, however, is not something we can accomplish on our own, without help. The correction of our internal programming requires journeying through the inner world of our own psyche. As the second line of *Difficulty at the Beginning* (Hex. 3) puts it, "If a man tries to hunt in a strange forest and has no guide, he loses his way. When he finds himself in difficulties he must not try to steal out of them unthinkingly and without guidance. Fate cannot be duped; premature effort, without the necessary guidance, ends in failure and disgrace." The *I Ching,* when used to resolve questions of doubt about important issues, acts as such a guide.

In putting important issues to the *I Ching*, we are made aware that we live on these two planes of existence at once: a hidden, inner-world existence, and an evident, outer-world existence. Progress on the inner plane is achieved by moral choices made in the outer world. Through this progress we develop a light form of ourselves that survives physical death. To bring this light form to maturity and realization through self-development is our ultimate Tao, or destiny. To avoid or ignore this destiny is to continually feel dissatisfied and in conflict with life.

As it is put in the *I Ching*, making progress in our inner-world existence requires bringing our psyches into order. This ordering and character development is always a matter of choice and willing assent. The Chinese word for Tao shows a foot guided by a head; the head chooses, the foot follows. The Tao refers to our inner path, therefore the choice is whether or not to follow the inner way, the guiding light, or lodestar within. The return of the personalities to its natural ordering occurs when our intellect and conscious will are subjugated to our inner truth, and when our inner thoughts are nourished by, and in harmony with, the Cosmos. The *I Ching* refers to this ordering as the Superior (true self). It is held in contrast with the Inferior Man, or false, ego-guided self. The true self is concerned with finding and following what feels harmonious within. The ego is said to be inferior because it is concerned only with considerations of gain and loss. The effort required to restore a person to his true self has nothing to do with practices of asceticism, or with rituals. Rather, it is directed to living in such a way that inner truth is never sacrificed to the considerations of the intellect when it has separated from what the true self knows and feels.

2. The Superior Man and the Inferior Man as Aspects of the Personality

In consulting the *I Ching* as a teacher (through using it daily as an oracle), we find that it focuses on bringing the personality into harmony with the overall Cosmic Order. In the simplest terms this means learning to act consistently in accordance with our deepest inner sense of truth.

It might well be asked, why should anyone think we do not already do this, and, are we not acting from our truth all the time anyway? It was the view of the ancient Chinese sages that our original nature is innocent, pure, and good, and that our original impulses are likewise good, because they emanate from our inner truth. They saw that social conditioning causes us to lose both this sense of innocence and purity, and our ability to respond from our inner sense of truth, a response that is always spontaneous, and without forethought. Moreover, they saw that when we are able to respond from this original innocence, our responses are perfectly suited to the situation at hand. Loss of our innocence is described in *Splitting Apart* (Hex. 23) as a splitting apart within the personality.

The personality splits apart from its natural innocence and from its connection with inner truth and the Cosmos through the undermining action of what the *I Ching* describes as "the inferiors." These are childish elements of personality that have been trained, through conditioning, to doubt our true nature and its natural capabilities. Through learning to doubt the true self, the inferiors accept the leadership of a false personality—the ego—that is created by the conditioning. The ego is created through the inferiors looking to images of the self that it is made to believe better suit the personality to survive in the real world than the true self. By shifting their allegiance to this false personality, the wholeness of the personality is split. This splitting is caused by what, in *Biting Through* (Hex. 21) is called "slanders on the truth." Such slanders have influenced the inferiors to think they are true, simply because they are widely held to be true, and because taboos have been put on our questioning them. Through believing that they "must be true," they are lent the credibility needed to give the ego power over the personality.

As fears and doubts are introduced into our minds and become institutionalized as part of our internal program, they act to freeze our emotional perspective in certain ways, making it impossible to respond naturally and innocently. This acceptance of thoughts that are not in harmony with the Cosmos occurs very early in childhood and continues throughout our formative years. The effect of this conditioning is to suppress, little by little, our original true nature, replacing it with the ego, or "the inferior man." This process is so gradual that we hardly notice it, and thus we miss the one key factor we need to know when we begin to try to re-establish the leadership of the true self: that the false self exists only because a part of us has enabled it, through giving it permission to exist. It has granted this permission, we also need to recognize, only because it has been made to doubt itself, and a number of Cosmic truths.

The presence of the fundamental doubt that the true self is the correct and capable leader of the personality creates a deep-seated and subconscious conflict within the psyche. This conflict emerges at some point in life, but especially around mid-life, when we find that the leadership of the personality by the ego has led to a number of critical dead-ends. Then we need to bring this subconscious conflict to the surface of consciousness and deal with it. To do this, it is necessary to rediscover what our original nature is, and then take up the work that was interrupted during early childhood, of bringing it to maturity.

In this work we reclaim and validate the true self, and re-establish it as leader of the personality.

In working with the *I Ching* we learn to identify the true and false aspects of our personality, and what represents a correctly ordered personality. Its hexagrams and metaphors reflect our inner truth, giving us the confidence we need to once more follow it. It leads us to understand the way that we can accomplish success in all matters—money, relationships, health, whatever—without compromising our inner truth. It also shows us that in following this way we initiate the help of the Cosmos to achieve our goals.

In the hexagrams, the actions of the true self and the ego are described respectively as the actions of the Superior Man and the Inferior Man. They are shown as contrasting courses of action that lead either to harmony with the Tao, which the *I Ching* calls "success," or against that harmony, which it calls "misfortune." Success and misfortune are seen to accrue to become overall life patterns called, respectively, Destiny and Fate. The success of the moment amounts to a step along the road of self-development, while misfortune is a step along a path that leads eventually to a dead-end. The firmly established, mature true self is in such fundamental harmony with the beneficial forces of nature that all things work to his benefit. His will, being attuned to the Cosmic Will, cannot fail. The *I Ching* say's that he succeeds in everything he does with the "inevitability of natural law." Indeed, "all oracles are bound to concur in his success." (See *Decrease*, Hex. 41, line five, and *Increase*, Hex. 42, line two.)

The work of self-development is to resolve all internal rifts, and to bring ones personality to wholeness. When the ego is displaced, the splitting of personality is healed and isolation from Cosmic help is ended. Illnesses that have their roots in internal conflict gradually abate and become eradicated. Conflicts with others are likewise eradicated.

The Superior Man and the Superiors

The Superior Man referred to in the *I Ching* can be taken as a metaphor for the full expression of our original good nature. It represents who and what we are when we consistently choose to follow our inner truth, when we have fully occupied and claimed our intrinsic space, and when we have maintained respect for our Cosmic teacher, the Sage that speaks through the *I Ching.* Such a person maintains his connection with the great treasure given him at birth—his inner truth.

In each hexagram, the way of the true self is contrasted with that of the ego, whose presumptions are based on conventional ideas. These presumptions are what the *I Ching*, in *Biting Through* (Hex. 21) refers to as "slanders on the truth." An example of such a slander is the idea that the Cosmos does not care about us, or that we are left without access to its help in our lives. Other presumptions may have to do with conventional thinking. *The Well* (Hex. 48) says in this regard, "A man may fail in his education to penetrate to the real roots of humanity and remain fixed in convention...." A number of hexagrams have lines that mention other common presumptions, such as thinking humility is a sign of weakness, and magnificence a sign of greatness. The first line of *Treading* (Hex. 10), for example, mentions that the best way to make progress is through "simple conduct." The first line of *Grace* (Hex. 22) notes that the seeker has already forgotten simplicity (walking on foot) and has begun to be magnificent (ride in a carriage). The ego's striving for magnificence manifests in an arrogant self-confidence that is particularly evident when things have gone well, or changed for the better (see *After Completion* (Hex. 63), line five). In recognizing that such presumptions create and maintain the ego, we are able to reject them, thus put ourselves back into harmony with the Cosmos. Putting things into order, this hexagram says, is the work

that fulfills us.

Each of the 64 hexagrams has a section entitled “The Image.” The image consists of one or two lines of text that describe how the true self relates to the circumstance depicted in the hexagram. In *The Creative* (Hex. 1), for example, the image says, “The Superior Man makes himself strong and untiring.” This counsel shows time to be the means by which things coming into existence are transformed into reality. In *The Receptive* (Hex. 2) it is said, “The Superior Man who has breadth of character carries the outer world.” In *Difficulty at the Beginning* (Hex. 3), “The Superior Man brings order out of confusion.” Such images of what the Superior Man, or true self, does occur in all but three hexagrams. These images are held in contrast to images of the Inferior Man, or ego, that does not act from simplicity, but constantly contrives situations that it hopes will lead to a magnificent success. Success, in the eyes of the ego, is always to achieve, in the eyes of society, an exaggerated view of itself. It is these desires of the ego that the *I Ching* regards as defective and decadent. Its attitudes act to undermine and defeat the true self and its development. They undermine, as well, the true self’s support system that the *I Ching* calls “the superiors.” These latter are natural virtues we possess, such as courage, honesty, kindness, and loyalty to our inner truth.

The section of the hexagrams called “The Image” are the work of anonymous Confucian scholars. It was added to the *I Ching* after the time of Confucius. It was an attempt on their part to distinguish between the actions of the ego and the actions of what they thought of as the “higher self.”

The “superiors” refer to aspects of our nature that are associated with the true self: the will toward the good, kindness, perseverance, openness, detachment, innocence, patience, and modesty. These qualities are also called “superior men” and “helpers.”

Our will toward the good is expressed in our willingness to meet the life situations in which we find ourselves with a certain kind of acceptance. Acceptance does not mean that we accept wrong things as correct. Rather, we mentally note that they are incorrect, say an inner no to them, and ask for Cosmic help to correct them. Then we really let them go. In the meantime, we give time for Cosmic help to come, in its own way. We do not superimpose our view of how this should happen, but wait patiently. This letting go frees us to relate to the situation spontaneously from our inner sense of truth. Acceptance does not preclude that we may state that what another is doing is incorrect for us to participate in, or to support. Nor does it preclude telling someone who is literally stepping on our toes, or encroaching into our space, to stop. In acting outwardly, the wrongdoer's true nature is not forgotten or abandoned. While we make no attempt to force him to correct the situation, we leave it for him to deal with. Often this is sufficient to correct the problem. In more subtle cases of encroachment, it is often sufficient to mentally note that the situation is incorrect, and to say an inner no. The inner no communicates to the others' true self through inner truth. (It does not communicate, however, if our thoughts are mixed with self-righteousness, or desire for retribution.) Sometimes, we are counseled to “wait until a real influence shows itself”; this may mean that a person will bring the subject up in such a way that it comes to us spontaneously what to say and do; then our actions conform to the true needs of the situation, and are especially meaningful. When, in more obstinate cases of ego-encroaching, we maintain a correct attitude and ask for Cosmic help, an unexpected event will bring about the correction needed, without our having to do anything.

Part of the correct waiting attitude of the true self is to hold to a detached and moderate view of things. For example, a person may make demands and claims that are exaggerated and unsuitable. The true self takes this in the context that if that person had a greater understanding, he would behave differently. He

does what he does because his view is limited; some element in him is still immature, or he is under the influence of a mistaken idea. The Chinese have a saying that "a lie is the truth to the liar." The liar lies because he is under the impression that lying is the only way he can handle problems. Having adopted this view, his lie becomes his truth. By seeing a person's actions in this way, we avoid the sort of emotional reaction to their misdeeds that prevents attaining the Cosmic help needed to rectify the situation. With this kind of detachment we also avoid giving energy to the other's ego.

When we take up the task of self-development, we are able to see that the daily events and predicaments of our lives show us the preeminent Cosmic laws that govern all things. We begin to see that through not having understood these laws, we have stumbled from one difficulty to another and have failed to find the meaning of our lives. Our everyday circumstances thus become the stage upon which our "lessons" in the Cosmic school are "played." The stage light is thrown into the corners where our decadent attitudes and those of others have been hiding. Because we understand how they are neither in harmony with our true natures nor the Cosmos, we are able to say an inner No to them, and thus free ourselves of them.

Waiting also is a kind of acceptance that is similar to the attitude of a person who, on suddenly finding himself thrown into the water, swims rather than drowns. We play our part in the life-drama with an openness to see where the path leads, and by allowing ourselves to be acted upon by events. Waiting, in this sense, is paradoxical. While we are waiting for the way to be shown, we go on with our lives, with no thought of waiting. With this "going on" attitude, we respond spontaneously in a creative way that is in harmony with the Cosmos. This attitude is the opposite of a balking, demanding, and egocentric attitude that, when adversity strikes, shuts down or collapses, refusing to go forward until it gets what it wants, or insists on always being at center stage, the focus around which all else moves.

Kindness, the fifth line of *Increase* (Hex. 42) explains, springs from "inner necessity." It is a part of the original innocence of our nature to be kind. It is our natural tendency, for example, on seeing a child about to run in front of a car, to automatically move to rescue it. Only afterward does the ego in us (the Inferior Man) enter to take credit, or to see an advantage in our having done it. If an animal runs in front of our automobile, it is natural to avoid hitting it. To steer toward it requires that we must previously have made a pact to steer straight ahead. It is against our nature to kill; therefore, in police and military work it is necessary to repeatedly shoot at human silhouettes to overcome this natural aversion. We accept violent answers to problems only through repeated conditioning to accept violence as a solution.

Similarly, it is our nature to be honest. To close ourselves off from others it is first necessary to create a reasonable pretext. We create such pretexts out of fear and doubt that doing the correct thing works. This is why, from the *I Ching* point of view, if an act springs from intention and is supported by self-justifications, the act is likely to be against our true natures, and therefore wrong in *I Ching* terms.

Openness is also part of our natural honesty. To close ourselves off or to give up on others is what the *I Ching* regards as executing them. To close down, it is first necessary to accept rationales and beliefs that close down our viewpoint. Then we are unable to imagine that the others could possibly be other than what we have branded them to be. We close down like this out of fear that another way of seeing things may expose us to risk. Fixed ideas make us feel we are safely barricaded against unseen threats, but they also barricade us from the possibility to grow. Once we have become accustomed to the easy comfort of our defenses, it is very difficult to give them up. Indeed, because on a deep inner level we know that holding to rigid defenses is against our inner truth, pride prevents us from facing this fact about ourselves. Thus, pride and fear maintain the fixed ideas in place. Only by seeing clearly how our defenses close us

down, and our fears lock us in an inner prison, can we act decisively against the fixed ideas that are at their base, and become liberated from their hold.

Modesty refers to an awareness of what is greater than ourselves. We respect the Cosmos and the incorrectness of any use of power. Modesty refers to being determined to be led by our inner truth and its knowing of what is harmonious and disharmonious, rather than follow only the intellect. It means flowing with events rather than resisting them, and to remain unstructured in mind rather than barricaded with fixed ideas. Modesty means we protect our dignity as the Cosmic gift it is, and we do not sacrifice being true to ourself for the sake of the specious considerations offered by the ego, and its vanity. This sort of modesty, founded on a continuing conscientiousness, accords with our true, original nature.

When as children we observed someone hurting an animal or bullying another child, we felt sympathy for the injured one. We also felt embarrassment, because the other person was violating his true nature. The child's naturally detached response has the unique quality of reflecting back the deed to the doer, causing him to see himself. When the child learns blame, guilt, and vindictiveness, and gives up on the person doing the wrong thing, he aids that person to become hardened in his sense of humiliation. Then that person is enabled to justify himself and to continue doing it. The response of the true self, on the other hand, automatically has a good effect on the wrongdoer, without there being a conscious intention to have an effect. In the beginning, children are naturally moral, modest, and detached. The natural modesty of the child is wordless and lacking in self-justification. It moves simply and naturally toward what is harmonious, and retreats from what feels disharmonious.

While perseverance is a quality we have at birth, it is essential to renew and develop it, once we have lost our natural innocence, for it is the glue needed to hold together the natural virtues that characterize our true self. Without perseverance—holding firmly to what feels true and correct—the ego will constantly insert those doubts that undermine our will, causing our personality to split apart.

A child perseveres in learning to eat, crawl, and walk, but does not think of it as perseverance; he simply does what is natural by continuing the learning process, step-by-step. However, once we consciously have the goal of learning to walk, as after being hospitalized, we focus on that goal to the point where everything we do is seen as reflecting on it. This focusing is a conscious intervention that makes it necessary to recognize that we must be patient, and proceed step-by-step. This exercise of our will to be patient is the meaning of perseverance. To accomplish our goal we must neither lose sight of it, nor keep it so obsessively in mind that our progress is collapsed by each setback. When a child fails he does not despair as an adult might who thinks, 'I'll never learn to walk,' and thereby jeopardizes his will to learn. Loss of this childlike innocence is a great setback for us. To compensate, we must persevere and maintain our innocence in a conscious way. Thus, the *I Ching* says again and again, "perseverance furthers." Maintaining conscious innocence entails keeping the forces of doubt and fear from our inner view. We avoid 'looking to the side' in envious comparisons with the progress of others; we avoid measuring each step in order to feel good when there is progress, or miserable when there are setbacks; we avoid expecting rewards for the effort we have put forth, and the arrogance, when such rewards are not forthcoming, to rail at Fate as a deliverer of harsh punishments. By keeping our inner view innocent and undemanding, like that of a child, we are able to acquire the humility and cheerful forward progress that wins the help of the Cosmos, whereby our goal is effortlessly achieved.

Virtually all these aspects of our nature are included in the idea of innocence expressed in the *I Ching*. In the hexagram *Innocence* (Hex. 25), the true self is described as "guileless." Ones "mind is natural and

true, unshadowed by reflection or ulterior designs. For wherever conscious purpose is to be seen, there the truth and innocence of nature have been lost. Nature that is not directed by the spirit is not true, but degenerate nature " Innocence also contains the idea that spontaneous responses, if they are not spoiled by previously made pacts, or conscious purpose, are in harmony with the Cosmos. Such natural responses, always correct, are made possible by a detached and open mind. We do not pre-plan them by anticipating what lies ahead, or structure them on the basis of what has happened before. We do not respond conditionally, by reference to what others do, or fail to do, but respond to the moment from our true self, by keeping aware of our inner sense of truth. If our response is influenced by the ego's seizing our natural anger, and turning it into vindictiveness, or desire, turning it into acts of encroachment, then our responses no longer arise from innocence. Innocence is a state that allows us to be acted upon by the Cosmos, whereby we become a conduit through which the Cosmos is expressed. How it expresses itself is something we cannot know in advance. The response may seem to the other as angry, yet we feel only firmness without anger; it may show itself as wit, or wisdom, or as tenderness, or in the field of action as great ability but it is always as if we have not, in and of ourselves, done it. Innocence gives actuality to all those aspects of our nature that are inherent, but which have been blocked by the development of the ego.

Innocence leads to insight. Our true self is that which is capable of looking at and listening to what is going on, either in the outer world, or in the inner world. The word intuition comes from the Latin word meaning *to look upon*, or *into*, and a *sight*, and *mental view*. Innocence is thus related to the word *insight*. People who can hear within are called psychics but, in truth, we all have this ability.

It is simply suppressed in most of us, or we are blocked from hearing it because we allow mental clutter to take up our inner space. Through inner listening and openness we are able to be aware of unseen dangers, such as other people's negative intentions. We are also able to receive insights from the Cosmos.

Our true self listens and looks, but does not speak. When we receive insights, they come from an inner world as something separate from ourselves, just as in looking at the outer world we are conscious that it is outside and apart from ourselves. What we hear within comes from the Cosmic Teacher, the same Sage who speaks through the *I Ching*. It knows the way and comes to help when we sincerely ask to be helped. We can only hear it when we maintain emptiness, innocence, and receptivity.

When we say a thing "comes totally out of the blue," this is an intuitive way of saying that we are helped by the Sage. We say "out of the blue," because the words and insights have the clarity of the sky and seem to come out of nowhere. What we say is what needs to be said and is perfectly appropriate. Innocence and emptiness make this receiving possible; we are noticeably free of emotional attachment, and our words come in the vernacular of the moment, so that everyone understands and agrees. When this happens we are always a bit surprised. The fact is, we are not in possession of such moments; we only make them happen through being in a complementary relationship with the Cosmos and its helping energies. The more we cultivate our true self within, the more life is able to flow in this way harmoniously and meaningfully.

The gift of insight differs from person to person. With Mozart it was the gift of hearing and composing music. With Einstein it was that of perceiving the fundamental principles of physics and numbers. With the famous French chef Escoffier, it was a gift with food. Others are gifted as parents, carpenters, potters, cabinet makers, actors. Some have mechanical genius or electronic wizardry. Others have a gift for getting along with people, or animals. Everyone is given gifts that he may bring to the arena of life because they are needed for the ordering of the whole. Here and there a truly wise man may be disguised as a mechanic

or common laborer. In his anonymous position, he often has a monumental impact on other's lives, without their being aware of it until later. The Sage, likewise, acts through people, and through helpful circumstances. Everyone is bringing these gifts forth, and they are part of the interweaving of a beautiful design. The Cosmos also manifests in sunshine, running water, still water, mountains, in valleys, trees, birds, stones—in everything all the time. As Lao Tzu wrote:

> The Great Tao is universal like a flood.
> How can it be turned to the right or to the left?
>
> All creatures depend on it,
> And it denies nothing to anyone.
>
> It does its work.
> But it makes no claims for itself.
>
> It clothes and feeds all,
> But it does not lord it over them:
> Thus, it may be called "the Little".
>
> All things return to it as to their home,
> But it does not lord it over them:
> Thus, it may be called "the Great."
>
> It is just because it does not wish to be great
> That its greatness is fully realized.

Then again, in another stanza,

> Tao never makes any ado,
> And yet it does everything.

And again,

> The Tao is hidden and nameless;
> Yet it alone knows how to render help and to fulfill.

Lao Tzu, The Tao Te Ching, translated by Dr. John C. H. Wu, Asian Institute Translation, No.1, St. John's University Press, N.Y., 1961

Love of the good is so much a part of our nature that to instruct us in it causes us to doubt it. The idea of teaching children commandments for following the good implies that it is not in their nature to follow it. To make an effort to do what one does naturally is not only unnecessary, it also has the worse effect of making us doubt our own goodness, and to doubt our love of the good. It would make more sense if we reinforced what children know by saying, "In being true to your nature you naturally love what is good." To think 'you must love good,' is to deny your own nature. Worse, it replaces natural love, which comes from the heart, with a mental love, which comes from the head. Mental love is a contradiction in terms. Moreover, striving to love mentally initiates an automatic and envious antagonism toward others who do not. It causes the person to think that if he does not do this, he might 'be bad, like the others.' In such

attitudes a whole vortex of darkness operates that characterizes not the true self, but the ego. The true self holds consciously to innocence to preserve the good that is within. It follows good for its own sake, neither to gain approval nor to avoid disapproval. The introduction into a child's mind that he needs *to become* anything, is to introduce the ego into his psyche.

We begin to see, in working daily with the *I Ching* how, through acculturation, we have assimilated doubts about our innate goodness and our inner knowledge of right and wrong; we see, too, that through having allowed doubt of what we inwardly know, we have relinquished our inner strength (and thereby our integrity and credibility) in favor of convention as the determiner of what is right and wrong. This acceptance of our not-knowing what we do know, to accept what others say as valid, prevents us from saying even the inner no to the incorrect things that go on around us. In the end, it is this inability and failure to say the inner no that empowers evil in the world, for the correction of social ills, finally, lies solely in the individual's exercise of his responsibility to be true to his own inner feelings about what is right or wrong in his life. It is not that one's inner truth is displaced forever by convention, but that while we are under its influence, our inner truth becomes suspended and inoperative.

By not resisting the acceptance of false and mistaken ideas within our own minds, these ideas become absorbed by default and become an internal program that dominates our life. When we finally see that this program has led us to tolerate evil in such a way that it now affects us personally, we then muster the strength and determination needed to displace it. Through self-development, the true self is reawakened and strengthened, in order that it can once again lead the personality.

There is a saying in Zen Buddhism that when one is young one 'sees the mountain', that when one grows to maturity one 'loses sight of the mountain', and that later on, one 'sees the mountain again'. As D. T. Suzuki explained it, when we are young we see things innocently, but then, through acculturation, we lose our innocence; finding ourselves to be lost, we begin to seek the correct way; through this search, in time, we regain our innocence. The new innocence, however, is no longer the unconscious innocence of youth; it is a 'conscious innocence' that we practice by keeping ourselves free of programmed thought, open in heart, and aware. Eventually, this innocence even becomes so established as a habit of mind that it once more becomes an unconscious innocence.

The process resembles a play: in Act I we have our innocent beginning; in Act II we lose ourselves in misunderstanding; in Act III we find ourselves again, and experience the joy of understanding that comes as the denouement. In this meaningful drama, life is the learning place, where making mistakes and misunderstanding things (as well as forgiving oneself) is absolutely necessary to the process.

Until we consult the Sage who speaks through the *I Ching*, we may never recognize that many of the cultural traditions we take for granted as true are decadent and destructive when seen from the Cosmic perspective. Nor may we become aware that the haunting feelings of dissatisfaction we experience from day to day come from not having followed a path that is true to ourselves. Many of us remain caught in an indolent attitude that finds no reason to purify ourselves. This attitude is really a stasis that results from fear of change that is maintained by the ego. We are made to undertake change only after we have crashed into that great realization that our life has no meaning. The ego asserts, in its defense, that life has no meaning. But our true self knows this to be false. It suspects that the confidence of the ego has no real basis. Only at this point may we be open-minded enough to seek, or ask for the help that brings the Cosmic Teacher. Many of us, at this point in life, experience the repetitious dream of being in a school where we have not attended any classes, but are suddenly faced with the final exam. The dire end that the

dream presents—of failing in the exam—refers to our disappointment at having missed the opportunity to fulfill our natures.

While it was force and threat that drove us away from our original innocence, it is free choice that enables us to find it again. Through having abandoned our true self to languish in an inner prison, we awaken one day to recognize that we may return to this work. We realize that fear and doubt have kept us from seeing that the prison door has never been locked, and that we could leave at any time. We even see that having betrayed ourselves was somehow necessary for our learning, and for the development of our humility. We are able to see that this is a life for learning, and for understanding ourselves and the Cosmos in which we live; the light and the dark are there to enable us to see with greater vision.

We may choose to fulfill our Tao, or Destiny, or not. That is the nature of free will. We may repeat our life many times until we decide to fulfill it. Then we must follow the solitary path in search of clarity. The *I Ching* is a lantern given us for this search.

The Inferiors, or Bodily Aspect of Self

not only do we have aspects of ourselves that are called the superiors, we also have aspects that are called the inferiors. These are different from the true self and the ego and are always referred to in the *I Ching* in the plural. It is my experience that they are our body cells, and may be thought of as our emotional body, or our body-intelligence. It is as if every cell in our bodies, or perhaps aggregates of cells, have intelligence and are able to communicate their needs in a larger, organized, and even highly verbal way. Thus, when our cells signal that their fuel and oxygen supplies are running out, we get a feeling that may be either nonverbal or verbal, that we are hungry or tired. When we sit in an uncomfortable position, our body gives us a nonverbal message that makes us change the position. When we are unable to do it, the message becomes verbal and insistent.

In its original meaning, the word emotion meant to move away, in the sense of reacting to something. Later, it came to mean stirring, or being agitated, or being affected by something. The emotional body, or body-intelligence (called “inferiors” in the *I Ching)* when we first become aware of it, reacts as a simpleminded intelligence. As such, it is blind, not being directly connected to what the eyes see. They know them only as feelings similar to those that register as pain, hunger, thirst, or fatigue. When they are not informed of the causes of such feelings, or how long these feelings will last, they express feelings of urgency to do something. The urgency of their expression is tamed when we know the causes and effects, as this knowledge is also communicated to them. For example, we may be hungry, but in being told that dinner is nearly ready, they no longer feel urgent. What is heard eases their concern, and their fears and doubts.

In the same way, their fears and doubts are put aside when we attain a correct Cosmic understanding of a situation that has in some way frightened them. The same effect may be observed when our superiors, such as patience and perseverance, are active. We can feel the calming effects that the call for patience has upon the inferiors when they are reassured that they will be fed. However, if food is a long time in coming, whether or not they remain calm depends upon the degree to which they have experienced neglect.

When the immature inferiors lack confidence in the true self, fear intrudes and the influence of the

superiors is undermined; then the inferiors become more and more hysterical in their demands. The inferiors exert great pressure to do something (anything) to alleviate their sense of feeling threatened. Worse, when in this state, they readily seize upon any apparent solution to the problem at hand, even though the solution may entail compromising the integrity and sanctity of the personality as a whole. This happens because the inferiors do not see things as a whole. Lacking cognition, they are not equipped to lead the personality. When they take over, the personality is bound to be placed in jeopardy. Then, whether things work out depends on chance.

Seen in meditation, the inferiors are dwarf-sized characters with childish personalities, not unlike the seven dwarfs of the fairy tale, *Snow White.* Just as she found them undisciplined when she first encountered them, we may find ours. This is because they have never been allowed, or helped, to mature. When I first saw my inferiors in meditation they were completely undisciplined, occupying my inner space with observations and exclamations about everything in sight, and singing ditties that repeated in my mind like a broken record. On one such occasion, I saw myself on a ship much like that of Columbus's, with the entire crew in rebellion about my 'sailing off into nowhere with this *I Ching* thing'. They were so preoccupied with looking at the difficulties of my life, and my not doing anything about them, that the ship (my self) that they were supposed to be attending, was in a state of total disrepair; it was clear that if I did not take them in hand, the next storm was sure to sink us. Since my *I Ching* guidance had forewarned me to marshal my armies against myself, I saw that the only thing to do was to kill the entire crew, which I did. (This sort of thing happens in meditation, when we make no effort to control it. I have found that such inner actions are necessary for dealing with impossibly rebellious and obdurate inferiors.) When I saw my ship in a later meditation, it was repaired and I had a new, neat, and disciplined crew. After years of making conscious choices to discipline them, and to help them understand, they have grown up. Now, they fulfill their true functions in the personality without being ruled by fear and doubt.

The inferiors, obviously, are a necessary and good part of our personality when their needs are attended to, when they are allowed to mature, and thus live within their natural limits. They lose their sense of limits, however, when they become flattered or intimidated by the ego to serve its ends. Then the body is used to promote the ego, and its self-image. Undisciplined bodily elements tend to express themselves in extreme ways. For example the hormonal nature of a woman's fertility would, if it could, have 20,000 babies, considering the 20,000 or so eggs that a woman's ovaries generate in one lifetime. The urges of the body, as this makes clear, must operate within limits. This sense of limits must come from the rightful leader of the self. When the true self has not been suppressed by the ego, there is a natural cooperation between it and the inferiors, and the two grow up together as partners. However, under the influence of the ego, they are induced to remain children enslaved to the ego's demands. They therefore become confused and unruly, having been informed that the true self is incompetent to lead them. To reunite the personality the true self must first be freed from the egos repression; then the inferiors need to he rehabilitated.

We can better understand the way the body intelligence is disciplined when we reflect on the way the apprentice carpenter, through repetition and practice, learns to hit the nail instead of his thumb. The pianist similarly teaches the body inferiors (his hands) to play thousands upon thousands of musical notes and patterns, that they then remember. The intellect coordinates the movement of the hands, with the beat of the rhythm. The true self listens to the musical line, communicating its sense of music to the whole, creating what we call "artistic expression." Without the hands (inferiors) or the intellect, nothing could be done. Without the sense of line given by the true self, no music would be made. In fulfilling its role, the body-intelligence receives its due in being recognized. In its role of aiding the true self to achieve the

goals of the personality, it finds its true and enduring source of happiness.

The quantity of doubt about ourselves that we learn in growing up determines the extent to which the ego gains power over the true self, and usurps the personality. By the time we encounter the *I Ching*, many of our inferiors are already under the domination of the ego. Their way of reacting to the flatteries and fears generated by the ego will have become powerful as habits of mind, and as programmed reactions to circumstances. The hexagram lines address these programmed responses, and the pacts we have made with ourselves to do, or not do things in given situations. These lines urge us to suspend our pacts, defenses, and distrust of the Cosmos; such a suspension enables us to see, in actual situations, that the Cosmos is indeed a friend.

A large part of the work of self-development is the disciplining of the bodily inferiors in such a way as wean them from their reliance on the ego. In *The Army* (Hex. 7) these components of the self are spoken of as troops that must be disciplined. While they are under the domination of the ego and are allowed to rebel, this hexagram says, defeat is inevitable, and the army "carries corpses in the wagon." The inferiors' pushing forward at any cost is mentioned throughout the *I Ching in* many hexagram lines. *Splitting Apart* (Hex. 23), refers to the takeover of the inferiors when they have been allowed to get out of control.

Inferiors as Ego-Based Ideas

In other references of the *I Ching*, the inferiors are referred to as *ideas suggested by the ego*, particularly doubts and fears that engage the bodily inferiors in emotional responses that pressure us to act. The first line of *Splitting Apart* (Hex. 23) describes these ego ideas as burrowing "from below in order to undermine the place where the superior man rests." In the fourth line of *Return* (Hex. 24), negative ideas are described as "a society composed of inferior people." [1]. In *The Joyous* (Hex. 58), negative ideas are meant when it is said that we are "keeping company with inferior people," and that we are tempted by "pleasures inappropriate for the Superior Man." In *Coming to Meet* (Hex. 44), "the principle of darkness ascends" as "the rise of the inferior element." This refers to times when the ego puts forth doubts. A line in *Splitting Apart* (Hex. 23) describes the superiors as "followers of the ruler" who are destroyed by slander and intrigue" (negative ideas).The superiors referred to are patience, willingness to be led by the Sage, sincerity in following the good, detachment, and trust. Doubt, with its attendant rationales, collapses all of these elements, and splits the personality apart. If the true self only slightly entertains doubts offered by the ego, the interior ideas the ego offers are able to take over and push us into aggressive action.

Inferior ideas vary in the degree of evil and danger they present. Those described in the *I Ching* as animals often refer to single inferior ideas, or to a habit of mind to which we are emotionally attached. The pheasant mentioned in *The Wanderer* (Hex. 56) represents a pleasantry—a comfortable but incorrect attitude we could easily give up. "He shoots a pheasant. It drops with the first arrow. In the end this brings both praise and office." In *The Power of the Great* (Hex. 34), a goat "butts against a hedge and becomes entangled." This pictures an obstinacy that originates in a belief in power, and manifests as a readiness to push our ideas on others in direct disregard of the caution and modest hesitation that would be normal for the true self. "Pigs and fishes" symbolize well-established ego-based habits of mind in ourselves or others that are gluttonous and demanding, and therefore "intractable' and "difficult to influence" (*Inner Truth*, Hex. 61). A cock crowing symbolizes the emptiness of trying to influence people by mere words (*Inner Truth*, Hex. 61). Game that must be caught because it "is devastating the fields," represents destructive negative ideas (*The Army*, Hex. 7). A hamster hiding things in its nest represents our true

selves harboring, or tolerating, bad habits of mind (*Progress*, Hex. 35, line four). “Three flattering foxes” represent ideas we like because they flatter our self-image *(Deliverance*, Hex. 40, line two). A “hawk on a high wall” that must be “forcibly removed’ because “he is hardened in his wickedness,’’represents either intractable pride, or a particular idea, or a vanity to which we are so firmly attached that, like the undisciplined crew of my ship, there is nothing to do but to “kill it” (*Deliverance*, Hex. 40, line six).

As we can see from these two kinds of inferiors, the body inferiors are dangerous only when they are under the influence of the half-truths and falsehoods that are part of the ego-directed, neurotic-pride system. Under the influence of the true self, the body inferiors become integrated into the fabric of the whole self. Inferiors that are incorrect ideas, however, must be eradicated, because they are in fundamental conflict with inner truth.

The action mentioned in *Influence* (Hex. 31), that is said to arise in the toes, calves, thighs, jaws, cheeks, and tongue, refers to thoughtless action and speech that spring impulsively from hidden negative ideas, faulty traditions, or pacts we have made to behave in a certain way. These ideas and pacts are so programmed into our thinking that they spring into action, often when we least expect it. Doubt-based ideas in our internal programming are described in *The Army* (Hex. 7) as an undisciplined army that can swiftly turn into a mob that is out of hand; in *Retreat*, (Hex. 33) line three, they are unreliable men- and maidservants who can easily turn into criminals and slanderers. “Comrades who are envious” become comrades who “no longer heed any warning” (*The Ting*, Hex. 50, line two)

Rehabilitating the bodily inferiors involves removing them from the influence of the ego-self-image. This is achieved through resolutely said inner no's. It also involves attending to their legitimate needs, and educating them. Partly they have behaved destructively because their legitimate needs either have been denied, or they have never been correctly understood or met. Instead of recognizing, honoring, and coming to terms with our bodily needs, we have shunted them aside as insignificant, or treated them only as servants to our vanity. It is our neglect (or neglect by our parents in helping us to understand our fears) that has also made them susceptible to the flatteries and promises of the ego.

In a meditation I had shortly after an accident in which I had suffered injuries, I saw a room full of children in all stages of injury, ranging from some, which were in a coma, to some that were barely hurt. I recognized that these children were my injured body cells. They were in a large hospital ward, and I could see that they felt confused and desolate. I recognized that because they could not see, they did not know what had happened to them. Through being shocked without any forewarning, they were terrorized that some new shock might come at any moment. It came to me to hug and comfort them, and to explain to them what had happened, and to reassure them that there was no need to think that something else was about to happen. I saw that they were immediately comforted, and believed everything I said. From that time on I had no pain, which was amazing, given the extent of my injuries. This and later meditations made me recognize that I needed to keep in touch with my bodily inferiors through meditation, and to be sympathetic and responsive to their needs.

The Inferior Man as Ego

To be sure, the original text of the *I Ching* never used the word ego in referring to the Inferior Man. That Wilhelm used the word in this regard is not surprising, since ego, in its aspect as an exaggerated self-confidence, is the antithesis of the virtue so highly prized by the *I Ching*—modesty. Indeed, nearly all

egocentric attitudes are disdained in Oriental societies, and this attitude also permeates the *I Ching*. In working with the *I Ching* over a period of time, however, one soon learns that its concept of ego is more than just an egocentric attitude.

While Freud and Jung regarded the ego as a component of the self, the ego of the *I Ching* refers to an entirely independent self that is created through acculturation. Once created, this false self dominates our consciousness, replacing our true self by suppressing if into the subconscious. The text of *Innocence* (Hex. 25) defines the true self as someone who "has received from heaven a nature innately good, to guide him in all his movements...." From the standpoint of the *I Ching*, the problem with the new self is that it is a deviation from our original nature, and therefore it is neither innocent nor true; nor is it able to "do right with instinctive sureness." As a false self, it is not only not in harmony with the Tao, or Cosmic Way, it is in direct conflict with it. So long as the ego is in command of the personality, the person excludes himself from the protection and beneficence of the Cosmos.

The creation of the ego happens gradually, during early childhood, when we are conditioned by our parents to be this or that kind of person. Our parents do this in the belief that it will help us succeed within the context of the social demands of the community. This process continues through the teenage years as the child further adapts himself to survive in the particular context of his community. From the standpoint of the child, he adapts out of the fear of being found unacceptable, thus abandoned by those on whom he is trained to think he is dependent; his family or his community.

Inspected more closely, this process of adaptation consists of choosing and adopting images of the self that become a mask a person wears and presents to the world. Each image that becomes part of the mask is adopted because it is perceived to fit the needs of the situation at hand. Sometimes it is an emergency situation in which the child responds, "I will behave!" in lieu of further punishment or threat. Sometimes it is more subtle, with the threat of the caretaker being; "I don't care who you really are, but you must at least show yourself to conform!'

Both these examples are undesirable, for different reasons. First, where the image is pressed upon the child forcibly to become his truth, his original self becomes repressed. Second, it is patently undesirable if the child receives a cynical impression from his parents that fraudulent behavior is the way of the world and that it justifies him to deal with life fraudulently. Parents sometimes allow a partial version of this view in the context that the world is such that it is sometimes necessary to hide oneself behind acceptable images. There is no problem with this so long as the child recognizes the difference between himself and the image he adopts. The danger exists, however, that the child might develop a self-image that includes the idea that he is smarter than others around him, or that he can control others through the appearances he presents to the world. In such a case he would build a base for an even stronger, cynical ego. The main problem is that all adopted images displace and repress parts of the original self. The gradual displacement of parts of the original self by a succession of self-images gives rise to the wholly new self —the ego. This composite of individual images is honed and polished over time into a final polished self-image.

In the process of shaping the self-images, we are not allowed to adopt just any image that suits us. We are given a narrow range choices of what is acceptable. It is similar to the way, in the early English colony of Massachusetts, the names settlers could give their towns had to be chosen from a list of "forty comely English town names." There was then, and there is now, an implicit though unwritten list of images that are acceptable within any given social unit.

Two things are striking about this process. The first is the perceived need. We are not born with a perceived need to become something we are not. That idea is pressed upon us by the fears of those around us, or else it is adopted because we become frightened of things that frighten those around us. I am reminded here of an evening when I was five years old, and my brothers and I were put in the care of an older woman who came to our house. During the evening a terrible thunderstorm arose. The woman, who herself was very frightened of thunderstorms, put my older brother and me under a bed and disappeared, perhaps getting under one herself. She was so agitated in doing this that my brother and I cried hysterically until the thunderstorm was over. Still sleepless when my parents returned near midnight, I called to my mother, who came to my bed, and I asked her, “How was it where you were? Did you have that terrible thunderstorm, and were you afraid?” She answered with complete calm, “Why yes, we had the storm where we were. No, I wasn’t afraid, were you?” In view of her complete composure I immediately reevaluated my fear, and said, “Well, no...” I remember thinking, if she was not afraid, there was nothing to be afraid of. From that time on I was never particularly frightened of thunderstorms. I make this point only to show that the fear that drives a perceived need is relative, and has to do with the quality and kind of fears present in a particular family, or social group, or even at a particular period of time. I am likewise reminded of having got a young horse that we put in with an older horse. The older horse happened to be hysterically frightened of certain things, such as the hot-air balloons that occasionally went over our property at a low altitude. If she were not locked in her stall, she would run through the fence, hurting herself and destroying anything in the way. As is typical of horses, the younger horse completely adopted her fear, to my regret. It is well known among horse people that the best way to bring up a horse is to house or keep it near a horse that is calm and cool, and to ride it only with such a horse until it becomes reassured about the objects and noises that tend to excite horses. In respect to the development of ego, the greater the doubts the parents have of themselves and the greater their fears, the more they will feel the need to conform to the group around them, and the more they will project this conformity upon their children, pressuring them to adopt the images or masks accepted by that group. Every social class, we may note, has its own set of fears, which tend to be institutionalized in that group also as its values.

The second striking thing about this process is that the ego is created by a series of decisions. A decision is made when the mask is chosen, in terms of which mask to wear, and another decision is made in our acquiescing to wear it. Through meditation I learned that all decisions to adapt and to choose images are like the on-off switches of computer programming. What we have switched on by deciding something, we can likewise switch off through a similar, conscious decision. One reason we are hindered in doing this, however, is that many of the decisions that formed our internal programming are repressed in the unconscious, as we have already noted. Another hindrance is that the rationales that accompany our original decisions work like anti-virus programs: they are triggered every time we try to see into our unconscious, or understand the programming, to reassert the original reasons we needed the images. Almost all resistance to looking within has this basis.

The work of self-development that one undertakes through the *I Ching* is to bring both the images and their supporting rationales into the full light of consciousness. This is necessary, for so long as they remain either subconscious, or dimly heard as back-of-the-mind thoughts, observations, or suggestions, they retain the power to distort what we see, and block our access to inner truth. When we are able to really look at these fears with the adult mind, we clearly see that they are exaggerated and unacceptable. Through its ability to mirror the unconscious, the *I Ching* dredges these fears up in such a way that we are able to see them from the Cosmic viewpoint. Seen from this viewpoint, the hysteria and fear surrounding them gives way, and we are able to switch them off.

It is not accidental that the fears of early childhood are repressed, especially in families where the pressure to conform has been great, or has been accompanied by any form of violence or violation, however subtle. In such situations, the threat of abandonment, even if only in the form of disapproval, is great. We scarcely recognize, unless we put ourselves back into the mind of the child, that the threat of being rejected by the parent as unacceptable is not merely the equivalent of a death threat, it is *an actual death threat*. This is because whenever a small child is abandoned emotionally as 'impossible', the child's psyche becomes surrounded by a cloud of doubt about himself that makes him emotionally dysfunctional . This doubt about himself causes him to give off negative vibrations that further isolate him from others. We see this process at work every time we hear a parent say to a child, "You are a bad child!" rather than saying "What you did was bad." There is a world of difference in the two expressions.

Accordingly, the images of ourselves that we adopt during our earliest childhood are those that are the most difficult to bring to the surface of consciousness later. This is because they are the very first images of doubt about ourselves that are pressed upon us to make sure that we adapt. These are the images that make us believe we need the ego, and they also keep us locked in its grip when we seek to free ourselves from it. The *I Ching* speaks of these images, and the attitudes they spawn, as "what has been spoiled" by the father and mother, in *Work On What Has Been Spoiled* (Hex. 18).

During the first few months of a baby's life, it generally receives the parents' unconditional love. This soon turns to conditional love in the form of rewards and punishments, to mold the child. The *I Ching* makes it clear in *Nourishment* (Hex. 27), that love is an essential nourishment. It also makes it clear, in the various lines of *Youthful Folly* (Hex. 4) and *Biting Through* (Hex. 21), that the withdrawal or withholding of love is a severe form of punishment for a child. This has been proven by many experiments in child psychology. One, in particular, showed that when a mother intentionally avoided looking into her baby's eyes for a period of time, the baby became noticeably distressed. The distress increased the longer she ignored it.

As noted earlier, all self-images that we adopt carry with them two rationales: why we must adopt them, and why one image and rationale is preferable over another. The rationales of our earliest childhood are adopted even before we have learned language; they may be said to be 'rationales of feeling'; they seem to be only remembrances of how we felt at the time. There was the feeling of threat, followed by a strong and perhaps even desperate urge to find the correct response that would release us from the threat; then there was the feeling of being released from the threat, because we found the correct response. This process institutionalized the response demanded as "correct." This chain of responses, or feelings, are retained in the unconscious, where they remain as the rationale that justifies, or supports the learned response. We are able to deactivate these feeling-rationales by remembering the feelings and examining their emotional basis; this applies to any strong convictions we have. We need to ask, to what degree are these convictions connected with an emotional need to feel defended? We next need to ask whether these convictions correspond to our innermost feelings. If we then understand them as only fearful responses, we will be able to discard them. If they are not really related to our innermost truth, seeing them as such is to say a decisive no to them, in the same way we reject the absurd idea that the 'moon is made of green cheese'.

It is not readily understood that all we need to do to become free within is to say no to the underlying image and its accompanying rationale. This difficulty comes from the ego's assertion that matters cannot be that simple. But of course, the ego is the first to assert such a rationale, as part of its system of defense. This defense system develops in the same way that the individual images become polished into a single

self-image. The anti-virus features of each rationale become combined into a single defense system that rejects all efforts to understand its parts, which activity it brands as 'tampering'. Realizing this, we can also understand why there is such resistance to our bringing the images adopted in the earliest childhood to the surface of consciousness, for they are the most important underpinnings of the ego. The images adopted during the teenage period are of a more surface nature; therefore they are neither as difficult to see, nor to reject, although because they have the nature of being a defense of pride, they can be quite resistant.

Any time the ego perceives a threat to its structuring, such as when we desire to change this structuring, as in changing a pattern of behavior, the ego replays, as if it were a prerecorded tape, the rationales that we originally were given for adopting that pattern, along with a memory of the threat, or fear. The feeling of dread this causes produces resistance to any further efforts on our part, either to look within, or to think about it further, our perseverance to continue our search is undermined, and we then sink into indolence and let things remain the same. In childhood fears, we hear agitated chidings that 'to make any changes in the program will jeopardize the integrity of the program, and thereby jeopardize the security we attain from it'; or that 'if we alter the program, we risk being thrown into chaos', and 'that to have no running program at all would be disastrous, and might even cause insanity'. Such rationales come from being influenced to think that *sanity is the structured thinking of the ego.* If we persist in our search, we will hear backup rationales reminding us of all the times in our lives when the program has produced stability and sanity. These rationales, however, quite ignore times when it has not. These rationales appear every time there is an attempt within the consciousness to recognize the images for what they are: a false self-image. They are also the basis for our denying that something as simple as saying no to them is all that is needed, and they are the elements that interject "but what if" questions when we come to the point of actually saying no.

During the mid-life crisis, when we become aware that our programming, as written, has become too rigid to allow us to live our lives effectively and fruitfully, we become greatly challenged. On the one hand, we suffer from the rigidity of the program; on the other, we are mocked by our fear to risk putting the program aside. We stay locked, therefore, in inner conflict. By consulting the *I Ching* systematically at this time, we undertake a process by which we are able to root out these rigidities (called "weeds" in *Resoluteness* (Hex. 43), line five) that are particularly troublesome in our personality. We learn first to put them aside, because that is easier than discarding them all at once; later, when we truly see their destructive nature, we have the strength needed to say a decisive no to them. These weeds are those decisions that, now overgrown and exaggerated, have led us only to dead-ends. The mid-life crisis shows us that the ego, in which we have placed our trust, has not acquired a power over circumstances, but only a power over ourselves. It is as if we have stepped into an image to be a certain somebody, only to have that image spring to life and run away, with us inside. We find that it behaves in unpredictable ways that make sense only to its own needs, and not to our own.

Our job, at this juncture, is to undertake self-development—the process by which we may find out who we really are. A friend who taught mind-training described her way of helping people reclaim who they are by drawing a rather large figure-eight in the sand, and having a student stand, one in each circle. She described the circle each stood in as representing a sort of blueprint of who that person was, with the other circle representing not only the other person, but also all other people with whom they may relate. "Now," she said, "each of you occupy your circle: walk all over it until your footprints completely cover it; then jump up and down and cry out, "This is mine!" Then she said, "as for whoever is in the other circle, you don't allow them to come into your circle uninvited, and you don't go into theirs uninvited, but

the bridge between is love."

I found this image of the figure-eight particularly useful because it shows what the work of self-development is: to fill out ones circle, or complete who we really are, in our original blueprint. At the same time, it defines who we are in relationship to others—both our connection to them, and to their space, and to the appropriate bridge between. At the beginning of our self-development we may find that we have occupied only a small part of our circle, and that we may have allowed others to occupy it, while we have only stood on the side. Our job is to take back our space from any others we have allowed to occupy it, or who have forced themselves into it to dominate us, or have walked all over it as if it was theirs to do whatever they want with it. We are meant to occupy, respect, and own it completely. Then and only then do we find our true self-worth and re-establish our natural dignity. Then and only then are we capable of opening our space to others, or of going, when invited, into their space without damaging ourselves or them.

Identifying the ego within ourselves, in all its self-image guises, is also the work of self-development. Each time that we are brought to see a stored self-image as it really is—a device, or rigidity within our personality caused by fear—and each time that we consciously identify its corresponding rationales, we are meant to reject its purpose and value, and say no to it. This work is impossible if we do not make a systematic effort, and if we lack an accurate mirror for seeing the hidden and repressed true self. By a systematic effort is meant that we displace the inner lassitude and resistance set up by the ego to protect itself, by reclaiming our inner truth. It is necessary to be deeply sincere in our way of life, and in seeking to know our inner truth. This deep inner sincerity enables the Cosmic teacher to appear. By an accurate mirror I mean the *I Ching*, which functions both as a teacher and as such a mirror. Its replies speak to the heart, where the true self resides. Working with the *I Ching* helps to free us from the decisions we have made that have created the ego, and continue to support it. These decisions must be reversed because they hold in place decadent patterns that are contrary to the true self, and to the natural order. By consulting the *I Ching* regularly and following its counsel, we are able to become reunited with our inner truth through a slow, step-by-step process of self-illumination that exactly fits our particular needs. Its lessons are combined with our everyday life experiences in such a way that every element in the chest of inner truth given us at birth is confirmed and established as a basis for the way we relate to our life. By following the *I Ching's* counsel, we not only invoke the help of the Cosmos, but we have establish a firm relationship with it.

It will certainly be asked, "what is so bad about the ego? Does it not have a legitimate function? See how it protected us as children." The problem, as one sees it again and again through working with the *I Ching*, is that its rationales are always contrary to one's inner truth, and therefore in conflict with the Tao. The rationales are created precisely to justify doing things that are in conflict with inner truth, otherwise the rationale would not be needed. Acting from innocence is to act before rationalizing begins. For instance, if one moves involuntarily to save a baby from running in front of a car, it is only a moment later when the ego interjects its rationale, "see how brave and selfless I was."The fact is, it was not the ego that did it; it was the involuntary action of our true nature, which has no intention and no need of being noticed or commended. The element in us that pleads on behalf of the ego is the ego itself.

All actions that are regarded as decadent behavior by the *I Ching* have to do with our abandoning inner truth. For instance, when we abandon caring (it is our original nature to be caring), we abandon inner truth. When we close our hearts against those to whom we are inwardly connected, we abandon inner truth. When we fail to react correctly to the ego-based actions of others, as by not retreating or saying the

inner no, we abandon inner truth. We are meant to withdraw into reserve when others are insensitive and unkind; if we fail to do so, because we fear their ego, and would prefer to remain comfortable with them, we abandon inner truth. We also abandon inner truth if we remain disengaged from them after they have reopened themselves to us. This usually happens when we allow the ego in us to insert itself, and to cling to wounded pride, or anger. The work of self-development, carried on in connection with the *I Ching,* is to resurrect inner truth from its repressed condition, and to reinstate it as a mind that, freed of programmed thinking, is tuned to our inner feelings. In this way it is able to respond correctly to each situation.

In *Splitting Apart* (Hex. 23) the ego is referred to as "undermining elements;" in *Darkening of the Light* (Hex. 36) it is referred to as the "dark force,""the Lord of Darkness," and the "ringleader of disorder." In *Before Completion* (Hex. 64) and *After Completion* (Hex. 63), domination of the ego is spoken of as the "devils country." Decisions that make up the ego, and that are particularly resistant and repressive to our inner truth because of their connection with pride and vanity, are seen as "hawks on a high wall" that must be "killed." That it calls them "hawks" is a reference to their predatory nature. In our unconscious they prey upon the perseverance, patience, and modesty we need if we are to engage the Cosmos in solving our problems.

We can surmise that the ego is depicted in the *I Ching* as a villain as a way of alerting us to the strong resolve and decisiveness that we will need, if we are to discredit and disable it. Our tendency to underestimate its strength, and the seriousness of the dangers it poses to our will, gives the *I Ching* in certain hexagram lines, an ascetic tone. (This is true, consequently, of my book, *A Guide to the I Ching* as well.) The on-off switch may be turned off only by a decisive and determined inner no. Even listening to, or entertaining the slightest hints and self-justifications reiterated by the ego to behave in a proud or vain manner must be vigorously resisted in the personality. The first line of *Coming to Meet* (Hex. 44) says that its arguments "must be checked with a brake of bronze." The commentary to this line adds, "If an inferior element has wormed its way in, it must be energetically checked at once. By consistently checking it, bad effects can be avoided....the insignificance of that which creeps in should not be a temptation to underrate it. A pig that is still young and lean cannot rage around much, but after it has eaten its fill and become strong, its true nature comes out if it has not previously been curbed." The vigorous resistance needed is a firmly said inner no.

While the above text points the ego out to be a villain, we are not meant to hate it or engage in a battle with it. This only gives it more power, for it only gains from the energy created by opposition. The ego, is, after all, a program made up of ideas, phrases, and images acquired from conditioning. It is made into an autonomous entity only by the power we grant to it to run our personalities. By rejecting the components of the program, in the form of its ideas, phrases, and images, which are in conflict with our true natures, we take the ego apart, bit by bit, and deprive it of the energies that enliven it. By identifying what its game is, and not playing it, it becomes deactivated. Regarding it either as a friend or enemy is to play its game. This task, of course, is not as simple as it is put, because we all grow up within an ego framework that is passed down from generation to generation, everywhere around us, and everywhere around the world. At first we are unable to distinguish that it is a foreign element, because of it is so widespread. Also, it is difficult because the ego operates within us, like a virus; it even speaks in the first person as "I," making us think it is our self speaking. But it also lectures us, addressing us as "You," as in "you ought to do this," and "we" when it wants to be recognized as part of a group. These aspects of the ego can only be discovered in meditation. With the help of the Sage, we begin to understand its makeup, and to distinguish its various voices: the voice of bravado, the voice of ambition, the voice of self-pity,

the voice of self-righteousness. The Sage teaches us how to relate to it, and how to deconstruct it. Because this work involves allowing material in our subconscious to surface into consciousness, we need the guidance of the Sage so that we are not overwhelmed by the egos tricks.

Our task, in the process of self-development, is to integrate the thinking part of ourselves within the feeling, intuitive part of ourselves. This is necessary, because part of the conditioning which creates the ego separates our thinking intelligence from our feelings of knowing. When thinking becomes autonomous (devoid of feeling), it no longer is in harmony with inner truth, and imbalance rules. Self-development, therefore, means getting in touch with our inner truth on a daily basis, in the context of our daily life experiences. The same may be said in reverse, that feeling, divorced from thinking, is also excessive. Evil, according to the *I Ching*, occurs when the intellect is exaggerated. All exaggeration is contrary to the cosmic order. In *Splitting Apart (*Hex. 23), the exaggerated self-confidence of the ego is pictured in the commentary to *The Image* as a steep and narrow mountain that "lacks a broad base, and so must topple over."

Self-development means reducing what is false in us, which means reducing the ego. We often begin self-development when we have got to the point in our lives when the principle of exaggeration, referred to in *Enthusiasm* (Hex. 16), line six, as "deluded enthusiasm," becomes exhausted. It is often only then that we can recognize that the ego is that element in us that would sacrifice our true selves to all its considerations, depriving us both of our life's meaning, and of the true joy we are meant to find in life.

When considerations of fear enter our thinking, the fear grows in strength until inner truth is obscure and clarity of mind is eclipsed. *Abundance* (Hex. 55) describes this as being a time when the light becomes so totally eclipsed that "the small stars can be seen at noon." The commentary to this line says, "This makes it impossible for an able man, though he might be the right hand of the ruler, to undertake anything. It is as though his arm were broken...." The man who "might be the right hand of the ruler" refers to the element in us that follows inner truth, and thus follows the Cosmic Way (as taught by the Sage who teaches through the *I Ching)*.

The obstinate power and resistance of the developed ego to being displaced is mentioned in a number of hexagram lines. The fourth line of *Breakthrough (Resoluteness)* (Hex. 43), for example, speaks of this obstinacy: A man "would like to push forward under any circumstances, but encounters insuperable obstacles. Thus his situation entails an inner conflict. This is due to the obstinacy with which he seeks to enforce his will. If he would desist from this obstinacy, everything would go well. But this advice, like so much other good counsel, will be ignored. For obstinacy makes a man unable to hear, for all that he has ears."

It must be said that not all aspects of our original nature are distorted by the process of acculturation. In those untouched areas, the ego does not operate, and our responses are natural and true.

Among the false ideas that are the most distorting are those doubts that make us feel that we were somehow born defective, or worse, potentially evil; also that we see life as nothing but a Vale of Tears [2]. The third line of *Duration* (Hex. 32) makes the point that harboring negative ideas tends to bring them into reality. I remember once, when leaving a hospital after giving birth to one of my children, the nurse's saying, "remember to keep your baby on a four-hour feeding schedule, otherwise you will make a monster of him." I now realize, from having consulted the *I Ching* for many years, that had I accepted this idea he would intuitively have understood it as a doubt of his intrinsic goodness. Any such doubt about a child's intrinsic goodness is strengthened when we, as parents, press our children to become a certain type of

person; this is further complicated when we add the phrase intended to create anxiety: “if you are to get along in the world.” Not only are we projecting upon them the idea that life is a Vale of Tears, but we also are suggesting that survival is something achievable only through our own sweat and effort. This point of view rules out the most important factor: the presence and capability of the Cosmos to help us. In carrying this myth forward, we obscure the important point—that discovering and fulfilling our partnership with the Cosmos is one of our primary tasks in this life. We do this, of course, because it was taken for granted by our elders that life is a Vale of Tears that can be dealt with only by contrivance and effort.

The acceptance of the idea that we are born defective, and that we are abandoned by the Cosmos to whatever devices we can muster to survive, is experienced as a wound in the center of the chest (center of being). This wound damages our natural self-esteem to such an extent that we no longer feel we are good enough as we naturally are. This damage is made even worse when the Cosmos is slandered as hostile, vindictive, and uncaring, which slander has the ego-purpose of making the Cosmos inaccessible to us, when we need help. We then do indeed feel that we are thrust into life as a Vale of Tears, insufficient within ourselves, devoid of the help we need to get through life, and no way out. These ideas create an unending inner conflict because it disagrees with what we inwardly know. The feeling of being trapped in a hostile life creates a constant underlying anxiety to create security in our lives. Moreover, because of our insecurity, we are subjected by the ego to all sorts of envy and competition. This results in building one barricade after another against being hurt, against being poor, and against any possibility of suffering. We do not see that by building all these barricades of distrust, we isolate ourselves from the Cosmos, which is ever willing to help those who are open to it, and who ask.

The wound in the center of the chest created by these negative ideas is sometimes felt as a gnawing hole that is accompanied by depression, insecurity, and emptiness. The feeling of depression is caused by the fact that we have isolated ourselves from the Cosmos. When we are at one with the Cosmos (that is also to say, with our inner truth) there is no conflict, and though we are alone, we do not feel lonely or isolated. Quite the opposite, we feel protected and supported, because we are protected and supported.

Once in meditation I saw and felt the damage caused by low self-esteem as just such a hole in the middle of my chest; it resembled a diseased cavity in a tooth. The gnawing feeling that came from it was ameliorated when I was recognized by others, and exacerbated when I felt rejected, or abandoned. Then I saw that much of my striving to please others was to fill this hole; but I realized that it could never be filled up by whatever I could do to please them, because it had its origin in feelings of abandonment by the Cosmos. In the meditation, I drilled out all the decayed part of the hole and filled it with cement, as a dentist would fill a tooth. This proved helpful, for I no longer felt the gnawing, and I was no longer so dependent on others’ approval. Gradually, by making choices to follow my inner truth, my self-esteem improved. In making these choices, I also experienced the Sage, as always coming to help when I was sincere in my way of life. Thus, the hole gradually healed from beneath until, in a later meditation, I saw that it had completely disappeared. Its disappearance coincided with my recognizing the true role of the Cosmos in my life.

In the child that has been given the idea that life is a place of striving and suffering, the ego is given the task of keeping the wound from hurting, and to keep the gnawing satiated. It tries to do this by almost any means, but primarily by earning the approval of parents and friends. When it succeeds, a high feeling (a temporary release from the pressure) is experienced; when it fails, depression and hurting are felt. Because we are so accustomed to the hole, we think it is a normal state, and therefore we do not think we can do anything about it. As a result, we content ourselves with temporary fixes and diversions. However,

each thing we do that is outside our natural moral limits (acts that betray our inner truth, or compromise our values to gain the approval of others) only further damages our self-esteem, increasing the size and corrosiveness of the hole. All addiction is related to the need to fill and refill this hole. Only when we really deal with the original wounding to our natures that is caused by doubting ourselves, and by doubting the role of the Cosmos in our lives, does the wound heal and the hole fill in.

The ego, of course, is not the element within us that is capable of healing the wound, or filling the hole. The wound can be healed only by the revitalization of the true self, and by freeing ourselves from the false ideas that have created inner conflict. The work, it must be noted, is an *undoing*, not a doing. It is neither necessary nor desirable to create another new self, nor to *be* this way or that. It is only necessary to undo, otherwise we do not eradicate the root of the problem; we only keep it covered up.

The ego may remain in control of our personality for a long time until Fate one day appears as adversity and shock. This often comes as the mid-life crisis, with its seemingly inexplicable depression and anxiety, or in the form of actual shock, such as an accident, or through the sudden death of someone we love, the loss of a job, or an illness. As I came into a meditation during this time of my life, I felt myself bump hard into something. Allowing my vision to focus, I saw that I was in a small boat that had rammed into the side of a canal, jarring me. The canal was what I imagined the Panama Canal to be—massive walls of concrete. I was made to realize that it was not a question of something bumping me, but of my running into it. It was then explained to me that so long as my boat went in the direction of the canal (the way the Cosmos works), all went well, but when I had ignored the Cosmic limits set for me (the canal's sides), and felt free to do whatever I pleased, I bumped into its sides. It was also clear that this was a huge, wide canal, and that I had been traveling in the wrong direction for some time. Suddenly, however, the walls closed in, and I no longer had the same latitude to err.

During times of shock we witness a temporary collapse of the ego-self-image. This happens because both the true self and the inferiors temporarily lose confidence in the ego, causing it to disappear (for indeed, its existence depends on their belief in its ability to lead). This loss of confidence happens because the ego is quickly spotted as having a defective, or insufficient program. The ego so totally disappears at this instant that it would seem it has died, for indeed, people in shock revert immediately to their childhood innocence. However, we soon find that its disappearance is only temporary, for as soon as the shock dies down, the true self thinks that it has overreacted, and that the ego was not defective after all. This perception re-empowers the ego, allowing it to creep back in and to resume its former strength. The importance of this event is that for a short time, the ego has been seen as inadequate; furthermore, for a short time, the true self has led the personality without its falling into total chaos. The true self does not fail to notice that it is more capable than it had imagined itself to be, and that the egos competence is questionable. Repeated shock enables the true self to gain ever more confidence in itself, while at the same time discrediting the ego more and more. Shock thus helps the true self to reassert itself as leader of the personality. That is why, after major shocks, people who are wild and reckless are seen to change and become more humble and responsible.

A particular danger occurs when we have neither wholly discredited (gotten rid of) the ego, nor reinstated it. Still possessing the power to dominate our attention, it falls into dark, self-flagellating moods. It puts forth the reason that if it is not the witty, exciting, glamorous image we thought it to be, then it must be a miserable, self-pitying hulk, good for nothing, incapable of achieving anything. In this dangerous mood it would rather sacrifice the entire self in suicide than accept a life in which it is not the key glamorous player, the hero or heroine of the self.

One source of help to us at this time is meditation, for it is in meditation that, with the help of the Sage, we are able to see the pompous ego as the originator of these thoughts. For example, in a meditation I once saw myself as Queen Elizabeth I (after watching on television the dramatic series by that name). I was being advised and harangued by the ego in me, here presented as the Prime Minister. I was only listening and agreeing, as if I were a subservient child rather than the queen of myself that I was meant to be. As soon as I recognized this, I saw that I must rouse myself from this lethargy and servility. I immediately fired the Prime Minister and took command. Such attempts to meditate, however, are often blocked by the ego; it tries to prevent us from looking within, for then we are able to see what is going on within ourselves. We are able, for example, to see that the ego is like the Wizard of Oz, manipulating things behind the scenes. The ego, therefore, tries to keep our attention focused on the external world. If we will but persist in our efforts to meditate, however, the ego must give way, for it lacks the ability to persevere. I am reminded of being recently in a hospital where the sick person, who was being repeatedly shocked by the medical tests and difficult treatments, was advised by a visiting friend that she needed to distract herself by listening to music and reading. I thought that this was precisely the time when the sick woman needed to reflect and do her inner work. Interestingly, the sick woman had no impulse to be distracted. She really wanted the time, forced upon her by the illness, to do this inner work.

Being only an image self, the ego is aware that it exists only as a form of consciousness. As such, it can never replace our true self, have a real life, or possess the immortality of the true self. Despite this, it somehow wants to be us, and to have that immortality, if it can figure out how to attain it. It therefore speaks in our consciousness as “we,” and as “I.” This makes it easy to miss the reality that it is an interloper in the personality. To defeat its hold it is necessary to reject its speaking as “we,” or “I.”

Once we become attuned to the voices of the ego, it is easy to see its constant parading before our real self, saying why it is the best-equipped leader of the self. It says, “I’m okay, yes?” “I’m doing a fine job, am I not?” “I really impressed them...see that!” It is as if it is on a stage playing to our real self, trying to impress and convince it, as to an audience. It likewise seeks recognition in other people’s eyes. “Yes, you do exist,” we seem to say when we give someone the flattering feedback they require. In this respect it needs and uses the energy of others to energize itself.

As the ringleader of self-deceptions, the ego looks ahead to anticipate events and behind to see if it can pat itself on the back for things accomplished; it fancies that it is responsible for every good thing that happens to us. It is full of self-praise, bravado, and, on certain occasions, exuberant enthusiasm. It is similarly full of denial when bad things happen.

During bad times the ego engages in dark-seeing—taking a dim view of people and events. It sees as if through dark glasses; “Prices are too high; taxes are too high; the system is out to get us; fate is hostile. ” This serves to distract our attention and thereby keep us from seeing that it is the originator of our difficulties. The inferiors, under its dominance, whine and despair when this dark outlook is being presented, and are enthusiastic and gleeful when things are presented to them as good. When things go well, the ego tends to assume that good times will last forever, therefore it indulges in arrogant presumptions. When things take a turn for the worse, it tends to assume that hard times are going to continue, with no end in sight. It maniacally alternates between hope and despair.

Once dismantled or dispersed, the ego attempts to reemerge in a variety of seductive ways. *Coming to Meet* (Hex. 44) describes its reentrance as a hardly noticeable, slightly negative mood, that once noticed, changes immediately into a whining, self-pitying voice. If we listen to it sympathetically, as to a self-

pitying child, we are immediately drawn into its negative vortex; then it suddenly abandons the appeal to our sympathy, and commands us to act according to its ideas, as in, 'change things, or else!' If we do not resist it while it is still weak and self-pitying, it soon attains full strength and becomes blatantly obstinate, proud, defensive, and factional, justifying its attitude as being decisive rather than wishy-washy. That is why the first line of *Coming to Meet* (Hex. 44) says, “It must be checked with a brake of bronze.... Even a lean pig has it in him to rage around.” The ego contrives, is restless and ambitious. In its ambitiousness, it tries to do a hundred things at once, not knowing any limits. It exuberantly admires, passionately hates, indulges petty likes and dislikes, pretends, and arrogantly tells others what they should, or should not do, having no respect for their intrinsic space. It looks up to heaven for protection while engaging in such wrong acts. It weighs and measures everything, seeking to be credited for every good deed done. It constantly looks in its inner mirror to see how it is succeeding. It seeks the glory of the high road and disdains the quiet patience of the low road. It is envious, vindictive, and impatient. It constantly sees all these negative qualities in others, but does not see them in itself. Because during shock the ego disappears, it can also be said that it is a true coward, as well as a bully. The ego is easily bored, and hence seeks excitement and sensation. It indulges in envious curiosity. It never seeks true learning, but uses knowledge only to gain power. It is sleepy-minded and goes to sleep when we meditate. For this reason, meditating gives us insight into its disguises and tricks. As the instigator of fear, it has a thousand devices, but when we gain insight into its devices and disguises, it loses power over us.

Because the ego relies on prestructured approaches, or formulas, to solve problems, relying on these programmed responses blocks our being helped and led by the Cosmos, for we can receive such help only when we remain receptive and unstructured in our thinking. Prestructured policies have the goal only of defending the ego from the Cosmos. Once, in meditation, I saw a wall of compartments, like the letter-compartments in the post office, except that they were made of glass. I could also see that each compartment had something in it, again like mail. Just as it came to me that each compartment contained a structured view I had about something, the apparatus crashed, its pieces tinkling down. It felt terrible, for a minute, that all my well thought-out, carefully compartmentalized ideas had crashed, but then I realized that these structured views also kept me from seeing anything from a new perspective. In still another meditation, I saw that I had barricaded myself in a foxhole (behind business policies) to protect myself from the constant problems that then seemed to be happening in my business. I had a machine-gun and was ready to shoot anything that showed itself. Then a voice over my head said, “Get out of the pit.” It was so authoritative that I felt I must do this, but not without protesting that I would get shot. After a minute of standing outside, in full view of anyone who might shoot, nothing happened. Then the voice said, “So long as you defend yourself you cannot be defended.” I realized from this that I am defended all the time by the Cosmos, whenever I relinquish my defenses.

When the undisciplined, frightened, or enthusiastic voices of the inferiors are added to the ego’s voice of bravado, the din of confusion so clutters our inner space that we are unable to hear the voice of the Sage within. Our inner eye is forced to see their concerns, and to hear their rationales. The ego's organized pacts to react a certain way so programs our reactions that we lose the natural spontaneity by which the perfect response to situations is made possible. The perceived risks of changing are so carefully channeled and neutralized that we become barricaded against life, and are no longer able to understand its meaning.

The fundamental conflict posed by the rise of the ego sooner or later comes to a head. As the sixth line of *The Receptive* (Hex. 2) puts it, “Dragons fight in the meadow.” “The dragon, symbol of heaven, comes to fight the false dragon that symbolizes the inflation of the earth principle.” This life or death conflict is

predestined by elements in our attitude, for so long as we choose to follow a false path, its dead-end is sure to finally stand squarely before us as the obstruction the *I Ching* calls Fate.

Intuitively we know that the only way we may fulfill our life's goal is by developing our true self. Our inferiors also want this, but they lack the means to find the way. Only that which is in harmony with the Cosmic Law is allowed; there are no shortcuts, despite the enthusiasm with which the ego in us proclaims, from time to time, that it has found "the way." Through self-development, the true self is meant to discipline and command the inferiors. Whether we respond to the opportunity provided by the crisis posed by Fate—to do so, and use the *I Ching* as a lantern to find the way, is something only some of us, during this lifetime, may do. As the ancient Greeks would have put it, the road lies through the Underworld; it requires that we pass Cerberus, the three-headed dog (the ego in us) that guards the entrance, and that we slay the dragon of fear that guards the inner treasure.

The intellect, it needs to be said, is not a bad thing in itself. It becomes evil only when it serves the ego; intellect compromises inner truth when thinking becomes autonomous, that is, separated from feeling. The single-mindedness of the intellect is well-suited and indeed indispensable to achieving many tasks: to train our body to do motor tasks, to play a musical instrument, to dress ourselves, to learn to speak and write languages, and to coordinate information. We grossly overestimate its capabilities, however, when under the command of the ego, it is exalted, made autonomous, and given command over our lives. The intellect has its true place only when it serves the true self. This is shown in the ordering of the hexagram lines, where the intellect, represented by the fourth line, is the line of the minister who serves the king (the true self). The king, represented by the fifth line, in turn serves the Sage, which is represented by the top line. (See *The I Ching,* page 351.)

When the true self rules the personality, it does not operate from pacts and strategies. It rather keeps attuned to our inner sense of truth, and finds answers in the necessity of the moment. It maintains openness and receptivity, to be able to receive suggestions from the Sage; thus it becomes a channel for the Cosmos. In this mode it is able to be called into action at the right time, and in the right way. The true self thus acts from a feeling that is not emotional, but rather a feeling of attunement to what feels harmonious, in order to stay centered within.

The true self is what remains when we have shed the ego. In contrast to the blustery bravado of the ego, the true self appears to be without any strong characteristics because it is free of the dramatic pretenses of self. It appears to be defenseless because it depends upon the invisible Cosmos for its help and protection. It appears to be an effete leader of self because it depends on the Sage, or on its inner feelings of harmony or disharmony for guidance. It thus is unable to justify itself in rationales that satisfy the ego. Yet precisely because it depends upon the Cosmos, it is defended. This is why, when a person allows himself to be guided by his inner truth, he finds the right direction and remains harmonious. His dependence on the Cosmos does not mean that he has faith, or presumes that he has Cosmic help. Rather, he is aware of the destructive power of doubt, and therefore remains resolute against it. He keeps himself unstructured, and attuned to the needs of the moment.

Self-development

Fate, in the *I Ching,* is synonymous with "misfortune." It is the result of exceeding the natural limits set for us as human beings. Destiny, by contrast, is the fulfillment of our natural capabilities and our unity with

the Cosmos. It is achieved through undertaking the task of bringing our thoughts and actions into harmony with the Cosmos.

To fail to undertake this task, as by ignoring or abiding it, is to engage Fate as obstruction. This obstruction is the dead-end found at the end of each wrong road. Fate stands squarely across every path charted and managed by the ego within us. It is only a matter of time before we meet it. Fate is not antagonistic or vindictive; it is there to teach us, in an impersonal way, that the goal may not be attained through false means. The Sage and Fate work as a pair, the Sage to guide and help. Fate as the dilemma that forces us to seek help. Fate, therefore, is the obstruction that comes from avoiding our true destiny.

Fate, as obstruction, is a door that can be unlocked only by the proper key—a correct attitude. Upon correcting our attitude we find that the obstruction moves aside, or a new path shows itself, or the pressure eases. If we then become careless again, and revert to the same ego-based habit of mind, or to a new incorrect attitude, we come to another dead-end. Fate matches the ego in us, move for move. Before we began our self-development, our errors seemed to have no particular consequence, or penalty; now we must immediately pay for every mistake. It is as if we have had our credit card taken away. Our way through or around obstructions must conform to Cosmic Laws. As the commentary to the third line in *Difficulty at the Beginning* (Hex. 3) states: "If a man tries to hunt in a strange forest and has no guide, he loses his way. When he finds himself in difficulties, he must not try to steal out of them unthinkingly and without guidance. Fate cannot be duped; premature effort, without the necessary guidance, ends in failure and disgrace. Therefore the true self, discerning the seeds of coming events, prefers to renounce a wish rather than to provoke failure and humiliation by trying to force its fulfillment."

On attempting to deal with obstructions, it becomes clear that the ego within us (posing as wit and brilliance) has neither the means nor the power to deal with them. The shock of failing in our assault upon the problems has the effect of turning the ego to rout. This is because, in all states of shock, both the true self, in turning control over to the ego, and the inferiors, which have placed all their confidence in it, begin to see that the ego is incompetent to achieve the true goals of the self (happiness, unity with others, and fulfillment of one's fundamental purpose in life). They do not yet recognize, either, that it is their attachment to, and confidence in, the ego that has brought it into existence and empowered it. The sudden lack of confidence created by shock therefore brings about its temporary disappearance. With the ego temporarily gone, the inferiors suddenly look once again to the true self. There exists for the first time a real opportunity to re-establish the leadership of the true self. The true self, however, is yet undeveloped and out of practice in leading the personality. It does not have the real confidence needed to lead the personality, due to being led to believe that it needs to be authorized by the conditioning element in society that has repressed it. Meanwhile, the spoiled and undisciplined inferiors are disconcerted by the mildness of the true self. They are accustomed to being controlled by the intimidations and flatteries of the ego. They are unaccustomed to, and suspicious of, the slow, step-by-step process of true self-development. On this account, they complain about the need to persevere. Their complaints are repeated, even with every slight improvement in the situation, for they expect great and immediate gains as proof that we are proceeding in the correct way. At this point we may receive the fifth line of *Enthusiasm* (Hex. 16), "Persistently ill and still does not die." The commentary adds, "A man is under constant pressure...however, this pressure has its advantages—it prevents him from consuming his powers in empty enthusiasm. Thus, constant pressure can actually serve to keep him alive." This is also to say that in a weakened state of will, we cannot afford the luxury of more false moves. During this time we tend to feel a seesawing effect as the ego is first suppressed by the humbling of the personality, and then allowed to revive as the difficulties ease. Very often we suffer ill health or depression because of the exhaustive

effect of internal conflict, and the oppressiveness of doubt. Our life's limited quantity of energy seems to be at its very bottom. *Oppression (Exhaustion)* (Hex. 47) compares our situation to that of a lake that has dried up.

Another deficiency in our situation comes from the emotional attachment that our inferiors have had to the ego as its leader. Until now the ego has kept the inferiors content with its appearance of being in control of situations, and to have the ability always to think up new strategies for dealing with problems. Even though the ego's interest in money, position, and power have lost their gloss, the inferiors still cling to the idea that their welfare is dependent upon its regaining control of matters. Thus, they long for things to be as they were in the past. As the ego's appearance of success rises and falls, therefore, the inferiors' sense of well-being rises and falls. They are as yet unaware that their dependence on the ego, and then longing for things to settle down and be as they were, is a mistake. They do not yet recognize that their well-being really depends on the leadership of the true self.

The inferiors cling to the leadership of the ego partly because the true self is not as colorful and exciting as the ego, which relies on the brilliance of self-assertion. Self-development means that we leave behind an emotional dependence on great high and low feelings. The ego, needing verification, depends on these highs and lows, without which it does not feel it is alive. In looking to the ego as the model, the inferiors do not remember, or have confidence, in the fact that true joy is the result of having attained serenity and inner peace. A part of the work of self-development is to detach the inferiors from looking to the ego as their model.

The work of returning to our original self, as already noted, is not a question of adopting attitudes that we believe to be correct. Correct attitudes are true to our nature. It is rather a question of subtracting what has been added, to uncover or reveal the true self. It is a work of inner cleansing and a rejecting of those ideas we have adopted that, from the Cosmic viewpoint, are inappropriate, inadequate, or simply untrue.

Other than to ask the Sages guidance in each different situation, there is no set of rules to be learned, just general principles of behavior. We are not told precisely how to respond; we are only reminded of our inner truth—how we really feel; thus, we meet each situation by keeping in mind only our own moral limits—our feeling of what is correct and in keeping with our dignity. Then, with a sincere mind, we seek the correct response. Often, this requires putting the intellect aside by letting go of the problem. With detachment, the answer, or right way, suddenly pops into consciousness, and we feel and know this answer to be the correct way. Everyone can remember instances when they lost something and went about frantically looking for it, only to remember where it was the moment they completely gave up the search. It is the same with finding the correct response, which the *I Ching* calls "clarity." When we let go of the problem, clarity is able to come as a clear perception and penetrating realization.

In working with the *I Ching* we gradually ferret out our hidden fears. Progress is necessarily slow and piecemeal if the fears are to be gradually diminished in strength. When our fears are in a greatly weakened state, we face them at their point of origin. At this point our strength is in place, and we have the help we need from the Cosmos to eradicate them. In this manner, they are unable to attack from behind while we face them in front. Because these fears are stored as images that have the greatly exaggerated (demonic) form of our childish imagination (for indeed, they originate in our childhood), to find and deal with them is a serious business, one that requires saying a vigorous No to them, and acquiring other such "weapons" that only the Sage knows how to help us attain. Our sincerity and request for help bring the help we need.

An important difficulty occurs it we mentally decide to dedicate ourselves to our self-development. Without our noticing it, the ego has intervened to find ways to regain control. Its first and most important tactic is to say to us that since we are determined to develop ourselves, it will join the effort. When we first hear this, we think that is a good idea. It would, after all, get rid of all that resistance. We do not recognize, however, that this cannot be, since the whole purpose and end of self-development is to defeat the ego. This ploy is only a flattery the ego puts to the true self to regain control. Or, one might say, the true self has not truly recognized that the ego is an enemy of the true self. The ego, we soon find, does not seek merely to join self-development, but to lead it. Once back in charge, it thinks only of pushing in a straight line to the goal, of forcing its way by effort and leverage, and substituting a guise of virtuous trying for a true sincerity. It looks about for comprehensive solutions that will shortcut the work that needs to be done, or will hide in prestructured religions and cults where it will appear to be spiritual merely by being attached to a group that regards itself as spiritual. If the true self allows such ego-inspired ambitions, the ego will remain in control, and the self-development that leads to a true inner independence will be defeated. The idea that the ego can help in self-development is a contradiction in terms. The goal cannot be won by spiritual show, elaborate rituals, or visible sacrifices. Only through a true modesty can inner strength and a true inner independence be acquired.

Reinvolvement of the ego occurs when we listen to its expressions of exasperation at how long it takes to make visible progress. No sooner does the ego envision itself busily at work, in charge of our progress, than it begins measuring the time it takes to get to the goal. It tallies even effort, measuring how far away it still remains. It reminds us at even moment how difficult and probably impossible it is to do things in this slow way of the Sage. It tolerates badly the zigzag way of the Sage. The Sage does not become involved with the egos hopes for reward, and therefore progress halts. Self-development is not something we can vigorously strive for, but something that happens within through slow, patient work.

Through consulting the *I Ching* daily and maintaining a practice of inner cleansing through meditation, we learn how to be led and defended by the Cosmos. We learn to apprehend the moods of the encroaching undisciplined inferiors; we learn to discipline them to be led and to wait, without knowing what is going to happen. Their discipline is to learn to follow patiently and willingly, instead of anxiously and grudgingly, as they did when they first approached the task of self-development, and were still under the influence of the ego, with its moods, expectations, and presumptions.

Whether in regard to our inferiors, or those of others, the *I Ching* emphasizes gaining inner assent. In a word, this means to self-develop because it feels good and correct to do so. Since our inferiors must sometimes endure privations and work in a menial and unnoticed position, it is necessary to ask their patience, and point out that impatience will only lead to a setback. By gaining the cooperation of the inferiors, we are better able to endure being misunderstood, and to quickly disperse approaching feelings of anger and frustration. The inferiors learn, too, through cooperating with the true self, to follow what feels correct and harmonious, without needing others to see them as correct. In doing so, they find in themselves a certain satisfaction for meeting a standard that inwardly feels right.

Following what is correct for its own sake, without thought of reward, is to be “modest about ones modesty.”*(Modesty,* Hex. 15) The training of many Eastern religions emphasizes the discipline and obedience of the inferiors; they seek to do this through enduring purposely induced hunger, pain, and other ascetic practices. The *I Ching* also counsels us to discipline our inferiors, but instead of employing ascetic practices, which focus on the bodily inferiors as the source of evil in the personality, it focuses on the ego because of the way it influences the inferiors to be undisciplined. The discipline counseled by the

I Ching is therefore directed toward the ideas we allow in our mental programming that encourage the inferiors to blindly follow the ego. Beyond this initial need for discipline, the goal is to gain the inferiors' willing adherence and cooperation in achieving the overall goals of the personality. A variety of hexagram lines in the *I Ching* address this discipline, and its limits. *The Army* (Hex. 7) speaks of the inferiors as "troops" that must be disciplined and obedient if the trials and challenges we meet are to be conquered. Since "wars," in *I Ching* terms, refer to inner conflicts between the inferiors which are initiated by the ego, the fifth line of this hexagram warns against "slaughtering all." It is not always undisciplined inferiors that need to be killed, but the ringleaders, or the ideas of the ego. *The Clinging* (Hex. 30), sixth line, says, "It is best to kill the leaders and take captive the followers." The commentary to this line adds, "In educating oneself it is best to root out bad habits and tolerate those that are harmless. For asceticism that is too strict, like sentences of undue severity, fails in its purpose." Just as we cannot force, or will, an experience to occur in meditation, we cannot force our inferiors to a "willing adherence." *Keeping Still* (Hex. 52), line three, says, "In exercises in meditation and concentration, one ought not to try to force results. Rather, calmness must develop naturally out of a state of inner composure. If one tries to induce calmness by means of artificial rigidity, meditation will lead to very unwholesome results." Achieving the inferiors' willingness to undergo privations for the sake of the greater goals of the personality makes it possible to accomplish great feats. While it is sometimes necessary to "kill" recalcitrant inferiors seen in meditation, in general their cooperation can be attained if matters are explained to them, and their cooperation is requested.

The work of disciplining our inferiors and obtaining their willing adherence requires first that clarity be attained, for when all parts of ourselves see clearly what to do, it is easy to do it. The second is to ask our inferiors for the disciplined reactions we need, in order to achieve our personality's goals. For the most part, just asking them to cooperate is sufficient to gain their cooperation. It is only the ego that needs a determined resistance.

In meditation we ask the inferiors, for instance, to keep still and to leave our mental space open and uncluttered. We ask them to keep disengaged upon seeing other peoples undisciplined inferiors, or ego-dominated behavior (the *I Ching* meaning of evil); we ask them to be tolerant, remembering the difficulties we have experienced in dealing with the obdurate ego in ourselves, and we ask them to help another by putting aside any disbelief that he can change. Through working with the *I Ching*, we learn to recognize when another's ego is dominating; we then warn our inferiors against engaging with him emotionally. We teach our inferiors to maintain a neutral attitude, and thereby de-energize the negative influences going on. We point out to our inferiors that others' egos are energized only by the emotional reactions we allow. We therefore ask our inferiors to resist the temptation to pick up on others' challenges to vie with them, or to engage in smart exchanges or arguments. We teach them to keep all ego elements at arm's length. In this manner, we prevent losing our own innocence, purity of mind, and inner strength. Having asked, we find that they do remain disciplined under fire, preventing the entrance of the ego, that wants to react, and to parade and demonstrate its image. We also ask our inferiors to disengage from situations in which the ego has already become involved. This requires that we ask them to disperse feelings of anger and alienation, and to relinquish any habitual assertion of having rights, and to return to inner neutrality. By asking all of these things, we train our inferiors to persevere. When they learn this, they actually join the ranks of our superiors, increasing the wealth and strength of the personality. We help them maintain discipline by reminding them that the great man exists as a potential in everyone, even when their worst aspects prevail. We also ask them to retain humility, by being on guard against self-congratulation when success results from our growth and development. We teach them that humility is both their sword and their shield against threat and harm.

By thus training, disciplining, and strengthening the inferiors, we rescue them from their domination by the ego. By doing this, we reunite the body and the mind, which have become separated by the ego. We thus fulfill the Cosmic design to rescue our true natures, and at the same time, that of others, for by following our own truth, without any intention to influence others, we win their courage to follow their inner truth.

When the injustices of others sometimes require us to endure being misunderstood, our perseverance is not something they see, for we demonstrate nothing. We say an inner no to being misunderstood, and ask the Cosmos to help resolve the matter. We may ask the Sage in their presence (the meaning of "seeing the great man") to intervene with their egos. We do not try to impress them with the truth of the situation, but depend on truth's penetrating power, and Cosmic help to resolve the matter. Similarly, we do not proselytize our way of life. It is consistent with respect for the dignity of others to allow them to find their own way. While we may help others when asked, to use every opportunity to explain our way of life is a sign that the ego is ambitious, and wishing to be recognized. We need to beware of times when the ego in us wants to press ourselves or our point of view upon others, or to parade its virtue. The Sage regards this as a use of power. All use of power is contrary to the Cosmos and its way.

We are able to help others when we respond spontaneously to the moments of opportunity that occur. These moments comprise short periods of time when people are open and receptive to our views. During this time we find, without forethought, the appropriate thing to say or do. As long as we are sincere, conscientious, and free of ego, the moment stays open. When we begin to indulge the ego in us, the moment closes. This can happen when we allow any consideration of comfort or desire to achieve our goal to cause us to overlook something that is incorrect (the *I Ching* regards this failure to be conscientious as being luxurious). (*After Completion*, Hex. 63, line five.) That is to say, rather than withdraw into reserve when another's ego parades, or when that person is no longer receptive to us, we coddle him in order not to lose our connection with him, or ruin the good time. We also coddle him when we allow ourselves to be intimidated by his ego. We must always be willing and ready to disengage and retreat when another's ego is active. If we fail to do so and press on, regardless, the good effect of our work is nullified and we throw ourselves away. In giving up a position of strength for one of weakness, we suffer a loss of self-esteem and inner independence. The consequent damage to our personality is called "darkening of the light." (See *The Family*, Hex. 37, line three.)

The work of self-development is to make us sensitive to what the *I Ching* calls "the openings" and "closings." Openings are moments of receptivity in others when we may relate openly and sincerely. Closings are moments in which their attention and interest wane. Then it is appropriate for us to retreat into detachment and neutrality. Development of sensitivity to where others are in terms of their receptivity and openness, or lack thereof, is the discipline of the true self. It is also to respect their essential dignity, and the space they need, to find their own way Throughout the times when they are closed to us, we need to hold to the idea of their great man within. Through this exercise, we learn to keep at bay the doubt that the ego in us would cast, that they are unable to find their own way, or are not worthy of our concern. Gradually, through keeping open to their potential, and aware and responsive to where they are, we win their inner assent to follow their own true natures. This is how the Sage helps us, and it is how we are meant to help others.

In his contact with others the follower of the Sage does not defend his point of view. To explain is one thing, but to defend is to become engaged with the others ego. It is better to go on one's way' and even allow oneself to be misunderstood than to strive with the other and thus throw oneself away. Instead, the work of change is to be achieved through inner truth. This indicates that inwardly we hold to what is

correct by saying no to the egos in others, and yes to their true selves. Being misunderstood, in any case, is no deterrent to progress. Often it is a necessary step in the process of understanding, just as we often misunderstand before we understand the way of the Sage. This does not mean that we encourage misunderstanding, or are ever less than sincere; it means only that we are not to be dismayed or alarmed when misunderstanding occurs. We do not intend to have any effect, we simply relate to each misunderstanding and obstruction patiently, knowing that time is the vehicle by which all will be resolved.

It is part of the greatness of Cosmic truth that it is paradoxical. The Sage, we might say, likes paradox. Or, we might say that the presence of both the dark and the light are necessary to seeing. Just when we are sure that a happening is disastrous, we begin to find that it has been accompanied by hidden benefits; indeed, bad luck has only been a disguise for good luck; when we think we have been abandoned and left alone, help has been simultaneously arising from a new quarter. The arrival of Cosmic help provides the denouement Cosmic truth, which we thought to be grim, is all light and relief.

Paradox is the message of *Opposition* (Hex. 38), that might well be titled “misunderstanding.” We misunderstand the meaning of life and the meaning of death when we think that the Sage and Fate are hostile. When we think that life is unfair, as when someone dies and is taken from us, our mistrust of the Sage and Fate causes us internal conflict; it is against our nature to rail at the Cosmos. When we decide that death, as something we don’t understand, is a negative thing, we shut ourselves off from any greater understanding of it. When we are in this kind of hostile mood, we tend to receive hexagram lines such as the third in *Opposition:* “Isolated through opposition, one meets a like-minded man with whom one can associate in good faith. Despite the danger, no blame.” The commentary explains that if the person can let go of his mistrust, the dangers of isolation will be overcome. The sixth line also refers to isolation “due to misunderstanding.” This misunderstanding causes a person to “misjudge his best friends, taking them to be unclean as a dirty pig and as dangerous as a wagon full of devils.” In time, it says, he will see his mistake and overcome the danger of seeing things in the wrong light. Misunderstandings are caused by misreading the meaning of events. The second line of *The Clinging* (Hex. 30) refers to truth as having a “yellow” rather than a white, light. Cosmic truth is moderate and soft, illuminating and relieving, not harsh and unpleasant. This is because it is relative rather than absolute. We often over-read the hexagrams because of a tendency to see things in their extreme. We do this because the ego in us holds everything we see up to rigid standards that are based on absolute truths devised by the thinking mind. Divorced from feeling, its truths are constantly tinged with self-righteousness, therefore have nothing to do with Cosmic truth, which is based on love.

The effect of self-development is to moderate the way we see things through dismissing and displacing the way the ego interprets events. We take things seriously, but not too seriously; we attain the middle road, or as Confucius put it, the “mean.” We work at our development steadily and patiently rather than with fervor. Although we are conscientious in trying to keep our attitudes correct, we do not despair when we make mistakes; if we slide backwards, we accept the setback and start again from this new place. We are conscientious to have the correct effect on other people, but we also do not attach ourselves to the impressions we make, or fail to make, on them. We let go of past errors, omissions, and regrets; they only inhibit our inner strength and engage fear and pride. We contemplate the past only to recognize and correct our errors, not to dwell on them; rather, we forgive ourselves for our shortcomings. It is enough to be resolved to try to do the correct thing in the future. Through self-development their importance and their bad effects disappear.

The meaning of acceptance, so frequently counseled by the *I Ching*, is not to be interpreted as, 'Well, that's the way it is' when something happens we do not understand. Until we attain a clear perspective, acceptance means: keep open, unstructured, and unresisting until you understand the inner truth of the situation.' Acting before we have attained this clarity is the source of mistakes. Acceptance also refers to the open-mindedness that enables inner truth to come through. Meanwhile, we go with the situation unresistingly until clarity is regained. Frequently this requires being resolute against the fearful, doubting voices of our inferiors, and the demanding, strident voice of the ego, which urges action. Any action will do. It also means that we neither look nor listen when our inferiors or ego point to the difficult situation, shouting out their fears and doubts, or their hopes and wants. During such times we need humbly to ask for help to ward off their panicking attacks. We are not always capable, all by ourselves, of holding them in check.

Acceptance also means that when a circumstance feels disharmonious, we do not flinch from saying an inner no, as in "no, that is not correct," and then turn the matter over to the Cosmos for correction. Although such an action seems passive, it engages Cosmic help. We say an outer no if we are confronted with a situation directly, as in being asked to participate in something that is against our principles; this is done firmly and resolutely, as in "no, that does not feel right to me." Then, without further ado, we let go of the matter, turning it over to the Cosmos for resolution; if necessary, we ask the Cosmos for help. Acceptance, in this case, is to trust the Cosmos to do what is necessary. Thus, we follow our inner truth regardless of how others may receive it, while keeping open-minded about the consequences. This kind of acceptance relies on the power of truth, and comes from the inner security of knowing that because truth is in harmony with the Cosmic laws, it will have the correct effect. We hold no grudges and make no claims, excuses, or self-justifications; we simply hold to the worth of having done what was correct.

Our entire work with the *I Ching* is meant to awaken us to an active relationship with the Sage/Cosmic Teacher. Through getting to know the Cosmos, not as a vague, impersonal entity, but as a practical, everyday source of help and guidance, which knows our innermost thoughts, we materialize the reality of the Cosmos (Sage/Teacher/ Cosmic Consciousness) out of the mists of myth and legend into the full reality of everyday experience.

Certainly, it is true that through our inner truth we know about the Cosmos already. Our link with it has been there since birth. However, life shows us that there are two kinds of knowing: there is an inner knowing that is comprehensive but vague, and there is a fully conscious knowing that is particular, and not vague. For example, we may know intuitively that the one we love is unfaithful, and this knowing may be supported by all sorts of behavior, but until the day when this knowledge surfaces into full, hard consciousness through having seen it with our own eyes, the knowledge of it remains only intuitive and vague. The day that we witness it directly produces such a shock that it is hard to understand our reaction. Similarly, we may have known for a long time that someone we love is dying of cancer, yet the fact of their death produces an unexpectedly strong emotional response. How can these two kinds of knowing, which are so different, be explained? When the ego leads our personality, the conscious mind disbelieves what we intuitively know because the ego is invested in the idea that conscious reality is the only reality; in the case of the person dying, it denies the reality of his death. Then, when death happens, the conscious mind and the inferiors, being unprepared, collapse in shock. One's knowledge of the Cosmos is similar. In the beginning of self-development we know about the Cosmos intuitively; we may have occasionally experienced it in a fully conscious way through its workings and wonders, but afterwards we will have rationalized the experience as some quirk of our imagination. Having gone this far, we hardly remember these events at a later time; it is as if they never happened at all. Through rationalization, our intuition of

the Cosmos becomes dimmed. Self-development reawakens us to the reality of the Cosmos. Through working with the Sage of the *I Ching* daily, this cognizance of the Cosmos's reality becomes an everyday fact of life. We experience the Sage directly, in small and big ways, until gradually, every particle of doubt is erased.

Eradicating doubt in its least visible forms and at its most germinal inceptions is our daily work. We cannot elevate ourselves over doubt by deciding to have faith, because doubt is really still there. Faith is a mental decision to believe, a forced effort as it were, to get around the half-believing, half-doubting state that comes from experiencing the Cosmos sporadically. Faith does not really face and deal with the underlying doubt it seeks to conquer. By deciding to have faith, we simply cover our doubts up. When this happens, pride (as denial) covers up the fact that the doubts are still there. Because of pride (in being good and not allowing any doubt), we defend our faith from the intuitive awareness that we have not yet conquered our doubts. Faith thus is another trick played upon us by the ego, and is but another defense against the Cosmos. Only by the most determined search can we find and dismiss all doubt within ourselves. Meanwhile, because we make a sincere effort to try to be true to ourselves, we are helped by the Cosmos as the invisible and unnameable, yet viable and constantly felt presence. Our new state is not faith or belief, or doubt or disbelief, but a confidence created through daily experiencing the help and teaching of the Sage.

As followers of the Sage we are not given a body of abstract truths to learn, and then possess, in the form of mental knowledge. The Sage makes us aware that our search is not for "the" truth, but for understanding, and understanding always comes in connection with our feelings as an insight. Insight always is a gift of the Sage, and the result of 'coming to meet the Sage halfway' through being willing to learn from the Sage.

As it is put in *The Well* (Hex. 50), this wisdom is available to all who come to drink from the Cosmic well (the *I Ching)*. Not infrequently we hear children and uneducated people say wise things. Innocent and honest hearts are always a ready conduit for the profound. If we are attuned to it, the Sage speaks to us in a thousand ways.

Footnotes

1. There is no doubt, of course, that King Wen's commentary referred to actual people as being inferior, but in using the *I Ching* as an oracle, one finds that it is referring to ones doubts and fears.

2. After the fall of Adam and Eve in the Bible, human beings were considered to be born with "original sin" from which they would need to be purged Human life, thereafter, was to be a Vale of Tears, with the necessities of life to be earned by the sweat of the brow.

3. The Sage

The Sage is the name given to the entity that speaks through the *I Ching*. That this entity has a certain personality becomes evident when one regularly consults it. We find out, for instance, that our attitude in approaching it is very important. If we have a prefixed idea that it is impossible that something could speak through a book, it will not speak with us. That is, the answers such people receive, once they agree to toss the coins, are totally inapplicable to anything anyone can think of. If a person is basically of this opinion, but a little bit open, the answer might be a rather vigorous rebuke. If a person has no particular opinion, and is only tossing the coins to please someone else, he might get an answer in which the Sage describes itself as a "resource in case you ever need me." If someone is insolent and joking toward it, they might get *Youthful Folly* (Hex. 4), or the top line of *The Creative* (Heaven), which says, "Arrogant dragon, may have cause to repent," indicating that insolence exposes a person to a certain danger, because insolence is in opposition to the Tao, or way of the Cosmos. If the person tossing the coins is truly seeking to know the Cosmic way, the Sage will respond attentively. When a person is in desperate need and cries out for help (even if only within himself), the Sage responds quickly with all the help necessary. These are the sorts of experiences that tell something about the personality of the Sage, and it is through such experiences that we learn how this entity tolerates and bears with our ignorance and mistakes and perseveres with us through our trials and growth. We learn that we can bring any question to it without being chastised, and that it will always respond from a wisdom greater than our own.

Thus also do we find that the Sage responds best to an attitude of humility and accessibility to being guided, an attitude that the *I Ching* calls receptivity. Receptivity means listening within to get in touch with our inner truth. We find that the Sage discourages a slavish, literal, and unreflecting use of the *I Ching*, by which we put aside what we already know as inner truth and look to it even to ask about every detail of our lives, or to form preset strategies for dealing with problems. Instead, we are meant to contemplate the messages and remain alert to how they are to be called forth at the right time to be put to use. When we remain inwardly aware, this use shows itself just at the moment we need it, and in exactly the right way. Much of the time the Sage, through the *I Ching* reading, both subtly and sometimes quite directly, mirrors back to us our attitudes, informing us when they are beneficial and in harmony with the Tao, and when they are harmful, or even dangerous.

This is not to say that the Sage will not direct our focus to the mundane, when we leave what it wants to discuss up to it. It is precisely in the mundane that our careless and destructive attitudes are to be found, where they are not thought to be so important, and it is these that the Sage wants us to correct, for they are against the way of the Cosmos.

Throughout this book I have made an attempt to avoid speaking of this entity as 'he' or she' because of a meditation I once had during my early years of consulting the *I Ching*. At the time of this meditation I had an almost incessant wish to know who the Sage was. I was to recognize later that this wish had to do with a fear that the Sage might be something I wouldn't like, despite the fact that the Sage had always answered as a real friend. The answer to my inner question came, soon enough, as an experience in meditation. This experience began with my seeing a somewhat plump Chinese mandarin who wore a cap, had pigtails, and sat on a cushion in a yoga position. There was something unpleasant in this image: everything but the eyes seemed plastic and dull; the eyes, however, were sharp and bright, as it seemed that they were merely looking through the lifeless mask. Being impressed with the whole rather than with the eyes, I gasped,

"Surely this is not the Sage!" At the same time, I tried to adjust my attitude to be open-minded, in case it was. Immediately after I decided to accept it (if that was what it was), the image changed to a long-faced, middle-aged, western man whose visage I can only describe as "blubbery." Again, the face appeared to be plastic and mask-like, with the same sharp, bright eyes looking through it. The possibility of the previous image being the Sage suddenly was ruled out, and I now had to ask, "Is this the Sage?" with the same worry. Then the image changed again. This time it was the figure of Christ standing beside a river, with one arm outstretched; the way he stood reminded me of a picture I had seen many times in Sunday School as a child. Disregarding my observation that the figure was strangely plastic and that the same sharp eyes were peering through it, I thought immediately that here, thank heaven, was the 'real' Sage. I hastened to kneel and worship, grasping him about the knees. To my astonishment, I grasped nothing but air! It was only an image, and not the Sage! While wondering what the message of these images was, I could not help noting how I had wanted the image to be Christ, and how that would have felt comfortable to me. No sooner had this thought occurred than my entire field of vision was taken over by a strong light. After a moment, the light began to recede, pulling up and away, out into the Universe, until it became one of the brightest stars in the whole field of millions of stars. As I pondered this, a verbal explanation began. It said people want and need an image of something if they are to understand it. The first two images represented my fear that the Sage might be someone totally foreign to me, from whom I would ever feel isolated; the third figure—that of Christ—was an image I preferred to have, because of my past training. All, however, were incorrect. The image that was the most correct was that of the bright light, for it represented a highly developed being (the Sage), whose nature is perfected. Then I realized that this being is but one of possibly millions of beings who have perfected their natures. They include what the *I Ching* calls the ancestors—those who have gone before us in completing their inner journey of self-development. The realization that so many people had overcome their fears to complete their true natures was extremely enlightening to me. Until then I thought that only a Christ, a Buddha, or a Lao Tzu had been able to perfect their natures. I suddenly recognized that a mechanic I had known down the street, who was hardly visible because of his sincerity, simplicity, and modesty, was undoubtedly one in that field of stars. It was also made clear to me that the Sage, in refusing to be 'the figure I wanted it to be," regards the favoritism and factionalism implied when we give it the image we want it to be as an immature viewpoint.

The image of the Sage as a "Being of Light" reminded me of the after-death experiences recorded by Dr. Raymond Moody in his book. *Life After Life,* and also of the Great White Spirit of the native Americans. That the Sage would prefer to remain free of our preferred identifications explained why in my meditations and dreams the Sage was always seen as faceless. There had been the faceless tour guide, the faceless teacher, the faceless director, and so on. Although I often perceived the Sage as a masculine figure, other people have told me they have seen the Sage as a feminine figure in meditation. It seems that we tend to give it whatever image that most helps us identify with it. For these reasons I refer to the Sage in this book variously as the Cosmos, the oracle voice of the Cosmos, and the Cosmic Consciousness, seeing that these names best describe what Lao Tzu meant by saying: "The Tao that can be named is not the Tao." *(Tao Te Ching)*

While the Sage obviously speaks through the *I Ching,* the Sage also communicates through other means, such as through shock, helpful coincidences, and subtle, humorous happenings. Once, while I was using the *I Ching*, the Sage alerted me to see that it might communicate by other means. This happened about two years after I began consulting it when someone told me I ought to use yarrow stalks, one of the traditional means by which the *I Ching* is consulted, instead of coins, the other traditional means. He asserted that any other method is not true to the *I Ching.* As I felt I had been tremendously helped by using

coins, I thought I ought to ask the *I Ching* about it. I therefore learned the yarrow stalk method and using it, asked the *I Ching*. The answer I received made no sense at all. As it was late, I went to sleep. The next morning it occurred to me to ask the same question by tossing coins. I received the same hexagram and the same changing line. Neither answer made sense verbally, yet the answer was clear: it made no difference which method I used. This made me aware that the Sage can communicate through a variety of means. One finds, through interacting with the Sage, that its hierarchy of principles is nearly the reverse of our customary values. The view held by many people that the most intellectual, smart, and clever people are the most successful, is the opposite of the Sage's values. The Sage values the low road of humility and sincerity, and the person whose attunement to his inner sense of what is true and good is more important than his intellect. The *I Ching* calls him a person of "inner worth." In *Peace* (Hex. 11), it is said that order exists in society when people of inner worth occupy the highest positions.

In the wisdom of the *I Ching* it is seen that inner worth influences people because it penetrates to their 'inner eye,' and thereby to their souls. It influences them without their being aware of it. That is why all external power is regarded as illusion, and is against the Cosmic harmony. We acquire influence through contemplating and acknowledging what is correct and incorrect, and in giving our inner yes or no to it.

The Sage makes us aware that in groups there are two kinds of leaders—the visible and the invisible. While our outer eyes (conscious attention) are usually focused on the external leaders, admiring what is strong, forthright, brave, or even bold, our inner eyes watch the one who is quietly firm and correct within himself. The same may be said of the social order, generally, that there exists an obvious outer leadership and an invisible 'inner leadership'. The hidden leadership tends to focus on the small but fundamental issues that make a big overall difference in the future, while the external leadership focuses on dealing with the big consequences of things already formed in the past. The hidden leadership is invisible to us mostly because we cannot see the significance of their concentrating on maintaining an inner awareness to respond correctly to the seemingly ordinary events in their everyday lives Moreover, they have no interest in striving and competing, or in being seen; therefore they do not engage the attention of the undeveloped mind. The more we cultivate our true natures, the more these people become visible to us.

The teachings of the Sage gradually make us aware of this hidden structuring of the social order, in which the most modest, sincere, conscientious, and true people succeed through engaging the helping forces of the Cosmos. As we gradually join the ranks of such people, by coming to recognize our own worth, we also become aware of these energies as they come to help us in multitudinous ways.

The Sage, working through the *I Ching*, makes us aware of an inner world existence that corresponds to and accompanies our outer world existence. We are taught about the power of our inner thoughts, about the reality of our inner connections with people, and how we may impact, without any external effort whatsoever, an outer world that is geared to and dominated by reversed values. These secret aspects of the *I Ching* are not perceivable by those who approach it purely as a book, or on a purely intellectual, analytical level; they are revealed only to those who submit themselves humbly to follow the guidance of the Sage who teaches through it. Certainly, the *I Ching* is useful and indeed wonderful to study as a book. Many people begin their serious study of it in this way. In meditation, I once saw the *I Ching* as a mountain covered bv trees. Suddenly with x-ray vision I saw that the interior of the mountain was full of rich veins of gold. I was simultaneously made aware that if everyone knew all that gold was there, the mountain would be taken apart and destroyed by people who were greedy to capitalize upon it, or who would be afraid of the power it gives people over their own lives. It was protected by its humble, ordinary appearance.

It has been my experience that the Sage ignores superficial questions and speaks only to our questions of real concern. In consulting it, therefore, it is not necessary to ask a particular question. One can safely know that it will address the topic that is most important for us at that given moment. Furthermore, it will stay on the same subject until we have understood the message. Our real concerns may have to do with money, health, relationships, or issues we would not ordinarily suspect as having to do with the Cosmos. Nevertheless, they are our path of the moment to growth and self-knowledge, for it is in how we relate to these things that our harmony with the Cosmos is established.

The Sage, as mentioned, tends to focus attention on our inner attitude as containing the answer to the problem of the moment. For example, if we have been vaguely tempted to do a thing that is incorrect, the Sage will suddenly stop answering the questions we think are important, to concentrate on this small temptation. When it finally occurs to us that this small temptation is what it is talking about, we receive the fourth line in *The Gentle, Penetrating* (Hex. 57) that says, "Remorse vanishes. During the hunt three kinds of game are caught." This indicates that the seemingly harmless temptation was based on a serious doubt that, if left unattended, would fuel a bigger problem in our lives.

These and other experiences show that the Sage is primarily concerned with our true self. In approaching it there is no necessity to observe rituals or forms, although the Sage does appreciate small acts that indicate respect and a sincere attitude. On the other hand, it would certainly remain inaccessible if our attitude had any element in it of flattery, servile obeisance, or bribery. Were we to allow such thoughts, we would likely receive *Contemplation* (Hex. 20), line four, chiding us for seeking to use the Sage as a tool. Nor does the Sage want us to promise to be good, obey, or join a church of the *I Ching.* Nor are we meant to accept someone else's interpretation of the *I Ching* hexagram lines as 'the correct interpretation'. While others more experienced may be of help, when what they say does not resonate with our own sense of truth, we are meant to listen to ourselves.

While the Sage rebuffs us and becomes distant when we make any form of demands, it returns as soon as we have been sorry and have again become modest, patient, receptive, and sincere. A man once told me he asked the *I Ching* whether or not he should apply for a job, and received *The Creative* (Hex. 1). He took this to mean yes. When he did not get the job, however, he received *Oppression/ Exhaustion* (Hex. 47). This made him annoyed with the *I Ching.* I asked if he had taken the answer to be a promise that he would get the job, and he acknowledged that to be the case. I pointed out to him that receiving *The Creative* had to do with there being a positive potential for him to get the job, rather than its being a promise. I could not tell him that whether or not the opportunity worked out depended on how he related to the opportunity. Nor could I say that egotistical expectation, or an attitude of testing is never answered by success. His receiving *Oppression* was a reflection of his having given up on the *I Ching* for not relating to the situation the way he felt it should.

On another occasion I gave a two-day seminar to a group of people who knew very little about the *I Ching.* My general practice is to allow the Sage to be the teacher. As always, I wondered, in throwing the coins, what the hexagrams would say to the group. We threw the coins three times on the first day, and three times the second day. Little by little a theme emerged.

Just after my general introduction, one of the seminar members stated right away that she was very skeptical about the whole process; she even suggested it was nonsense. I took her statement as our point of departure to cast the first hexagram as an answer from the Sage. We received *Darkening of the Light* (Hex. 36), line one, that says, "With grandiose resolve a man endeavors to soar above all obstacles, but

thus encounters a hostile fate. He retreats and evades the issue..." The group as a whole concluded that the hexagram reflected tension in the group, and an underlying distrust of the process. Accordingly, the light was darkened with doubt. The hexagram changed to *Modesty* (Hex. 15), which to them seemed to imply that what was needed was a certain modest (receptive) attitude.

The second hexagram we developed was *The Receptive* (Hex. 2) with the third line changing. The changing hexagram again was *Modesty.* The third line of *The Receptive* speaks of "hidden lines" which come to help. This refers to help coming from the Cosmos when we are receptive. It also speaks of allowing oneself to be taught, so that ones abilities are allowed to mature. Having received modesty twice seemed to signal to the group that great emphasis was being placed on modesty and its wholesome effects, but especially in regard to acquiring help from the Sage. In all the hexagrams that followed during that seminar, the message was that if those present would make themselves open and free of vanity, they could enter the service of the good and acquire influence, giving their lives meaning. Little by little, the distrust that had occurred at the beginning was resolved. The group was led to see how distrust itself was immodesty, and that lack of modesty prevented them from learning the cosmic lessons. Little by little, the sense of disorder that was experienced at the beginning changed into fellowship and trust. At the end of the seminar everyone agreed that the theme consistently put forward was, "How the Master Teacher Creates Order Out of Chaos."

At the end of this seminar I demonstrated the method of meditating that I had learned from the *I Ching*. The result was that two people had meditations in which they saw a diffused light that they reported made them feel whole and good. I, too, had a meditation in which I saw a field of lit candles—thousands of them. As soon as I saw them, however, a wind came up and blew them all out. I was shocked and disappointed. As I sat in the darkness wondering what this meant, I noticed a small purplish-green light off to the right, and went there to investigate. Under a type of lamp that is put over plants to make them grow were thousands of young plants in a protective frame. I immediately saw that they were no ordinary plants. Each one emitted a glowing greenish light that lit up the entire growing bed. Because the light was growing from within them, I saw it could not be blown out. I immediately recognized that this was what had happened in our group.

This image of light growing from within remains for me a wonderful memory of this time in which the Sage brought order out of chaos. The Sage also knows how to make light grow from within us. This is not unusual, when we have the humility to submit ourselves to being taught by such a Master Teacher.

4. The Sage-Student Relationship

We begin as students of the *I Ching* usually because we have been confronted by an important life problem, or crisis. Our need for help is often such that even without our being conscious of it, our normal distrust has been temporarily suspended. It is during this moment of openness that the Sage is able to respond to our inner cry for help, and if this help comes in the form of the *I Ching* we become its students. The help we can expect to receive, we need to be aware, is in proportion to the openness of our attitude. The more open (and humble) our basic attitude, the more help we receive. Typically, however, as the student feels relief from the difficulties that have driven him to seek help, his ego re-enters and his modesty decreases. The Sage consequently withdraws and communication becomes more difficult (the messages are more obscure). For some time the students attitude (and rate of success) will be driven by the level of his need. Eventually, the student comes to see that his efforts to remain humble are always rewarded.

It is in such a way that we come to recognize that the Sage relates to us or retreats from us with an absolute consistency. We do not know it at once, but this is also meant to be the model for our relating to others.

Through regularly consulting the *I Ching*, we become able to predict what sorts of answers we will receive in regard to certain situations This fact is not due to the similarity of parts of the text, but rather to the Sage's consistency in what it values. The Sage is not only consistent in its values, it will not relinquish a point until we have thoroughly understood it. For example, if we have not yet understood a message, we may receive the same hexagram the next several times we consult it. Sometimes we receive the same hexagram together with the same changing lines. With persistence in trying to understand, the correct message soon dawns on us.

In my first year of consulting the *I Ching,* I received *Keeping Still* (Hex. 52) repeatedly. It was not until I finally guessed that it wanted me to meditate, and did it, that the repetition stopped. Then I began to receive messages about how to meditate, such as line one of *The Clinging* (Hex. 30). This line speaks of intercepting negative thoughts in their seed form just after waking, before they have taken root in our conscious minds; only then, we are informed, are we able to effectively resist and prevent them from dominating our inner space. Other hexagram lines instructed me how, through meditation, I could control runaway emotional elements within myself. I have since written about these experiences in my book, *The Other Way, A Book of Meditation Experiences Based on the I Ching*.

Certain hexagram lines in the *I Ching* describe the attitude the Sage has toward those who seek its help. For example, the commentary to the sixth line of *Approach* (Hex. 19) says: "A sage who has put the world behind him and who in spirit has already withdrawn from life may, under certain circumstances, decide to return once more to the here and now and to approach other men. This means great good fortune for the men whom he teaches and helps. And for him this greathearted humbling of himself is blameless." The fourth line of *The Abysmal* (Hex. 29) describes the spontaneous help that the Sage sometimes gives when it knows we are endangered by doubt: "A jug of wine, a bowl of rice with it; Earthen vessels simply handed in through the window. There is certainly no blame in this."

The Sage describes the optimum attitude of the seeker as open, unstructured, and modest. In *Influence*

(Hex. 31), it is said that "the mind should be kept humble and free, so that it may remain receptive to good advice. People soon give up counseling a man who thinks that he knows everything better than anyone else." A sentence in *Youthful Folly* (Hex. 4) warns against "importuning" through distrustful questioning, but so long as the seeker sincerely wishes further information, or to better understand the answer given, the Sage will continue the discussion.

It is my experience that it is important to give the Sage enough space to explain itself. When we first begin consulting the *I Ching,* we experience that drawing a single hexagram and its changing hexagram is often a complete and sufficient answer to our question of the moment. As we begin to be more experienced with the *I Ching,* however, we find that developing a single hexagram serves more in the nature of being an introduction to what the Sage wants to talk about. Developing a second hexagram allows a more complex interaction between our inner questions and its answers. The second hexagram further clarifies the first one drawn. After we have thoroughly contemplated the second answer, a third hexagram extends and clarifies the subject further. In developing these extra hexagrams we give the Sage space to respond to the inner questions that the hexagrams elicit, or to correct a mistaken idea we have of what it is trying to say. Used in this way, a dialog, or conversation becomes possible between ourselves and the Sage.

Since the Sage, as mentioned earlier, tends to address our questions of greatest inner concern, regardless of whether we phrase them, it is my practice to ask, when I first begin consulting it, "What do I need to know now?" I find that the Sage tends to ignore questions of idle curiosity, and to answer secondary questions only when primary ones are understood first. Through the hexagrams developed by the oracle method, the Sage builds our understanding from the ground up, putting everything in its appropriate place in order that we can see things from the Cosmic Viewpoint. The Sage wastes no time on non-essentials or trivialities.

Perhaps because it is often the beginner's tendency to remain at arm's length with the *I Ching,* and to scout the way tentatively before he believes the counsel given, the Sage belabors the question at hand until it is understood in all its ramifications. A line in *Youthful Folly* (Hex. 4) describes this patient, plodding way as fostering the student's "character by a thoroughness that skips nothing but, like water, gradually and steadily fills up all gaps and so flows onward." [1]

On first approaching the Sage, the true and false aspects of our nature are intermingled and disorganized, and our knowledge of the affairs of the inner world are virtually nonexistent. This state is called youthful folly—a condition of ignorance that from the view of the Sage is not a disgrace, since we cannot be expected to know about the inner world before we have been guided through it. "In the time of youth," a line from *Youthful Folly* says, "folly is not an evil. One may succeed in spite of it, provided one finds an experienced teacher and has the right attitude toward him." In being aware that he needs to know, the student has the necessary modesty to learn; if he then attains "a perseverance that never slackens until the points are mastered one by one...," a "real success is sure to follow."

The time before we began consulting the Sage is called standstill. The hexagram named *Standstill* (Hex. 12) speaks of this as a time when "owing to the influence of inferior men, mutual mistrust prevails...fruitful activity is rendered impossible, because the fundamentals are wrong." Nevertheless, "he who acts at the command of the highest" is led out of disorder. This hexagram is often a reference to the habits of mind and attitudes that belong to the time of standstill—the time before we began our studies with the Sage. Receiving it nudges us to look at old habits of mind (defenses, aggressive patterns, presumptions, acceptance of conventional values, etc.) that are inappropriate to the way that is in harmony

with the Tao, and with our true selves. It may also refer to another with whom we are relating, who is stuck in a conventional viewpoint, or whose inner truth is suppressed.

The Sage's method of teaching is to alternate the application of pressure and help with leaving the student free to apply his new knowledge without help. When the student is left free, he is soon faced with a challenge for which he has been prepared by his guidance to react in a certain way. However, because he has not gathered the courage to risk following this advice, he invariably fails the challenge. He is counseled at this point to persevere and not give up. By mustering his determination to go on, in spite of the resistance created by his pride for having failed, the challenge recurs and this time he masters the lesson. Often this process happens three times, as is mentioned in *Revolution* (Hex. 49), line three: "When talk of revolution has gone the rounds three times, one may commit himself, and men will believe him." The experience of having success in solving the problem the Cosmic Way translates the student's learning from 'knowledge of the head' to 'knowledge of the heart'. This way of being taught by the Sage gives the student an ever greater trust to follow his inner truth.

The pressure put on the student by his having seen that he is caught in a negative Fate propels him to correct his way of life. This pressure serves as a lever to make the student discipline himself and is mentioned in the commentary to the fifth line of *Enthusiasm* (Hex. 16): "Here enthusiasm is obstructed. A man is under constant pressure, which prevents him from breathing freely. However, this pressure has its advantage—it prevents him from consuming his powers in empty enthusiasm. Thus constant pressure can actually serve to keep one alive." As the student corrects each faulty attitude he is relieved from a portion of this pressure. When he is finally and fully released from the pressure, he experiences the euphoria of life as it is normally meant to be lived. Just at the moment he is released from pressure, however, he needs to be careful not to think that now his training is over, and all he needs to do is to enjoy the rewards of his hard work. The pressure has been removed only temporarily because, as the first line in *Youthful Folly* puts it, "discipline should not degenerate into drill." For the time being only, "the fetters have been removed." The fifth line of *Waiting* (Hex. 5), calls this an "interval of peace," explaining that "even in the midst of danger there come intervals of peace when things go relatively well. If we possess enough inner strength, we should take advantage of these intervals to fortify ourselves for renewed struggle. We must know how to enjoy the moment without being deflected from the goal, for perseverance is needed to remain victorious." Other hexagram lines in the *I Ching* explain that such intervals of peace are necessary because, "it is not possible to achieve everything all at once. The height of wisdom is to allow people enough recreation to quicken pleasure in their work until the task is completed." Soon enough, respite from the pressure and danger end and the next important lesson begins. By allowing himself to be led through these learning experiences in which he is faced with situations that bring forth his fears and doubts, the student develops a strength that is not subject to fears and doubts; he learns to trust the wisdom and protection given him by the Sage, and to develop that seriousness of purpose that describes the developed personality: "The shock terrifies for a hundred miles and he does not let fall the sacrificial spoon and chalice." (See *Shock* (Hex. 51) *The Judgment*.)

Through this learning process, which is extremely gradual, the student frequently receives the counsel: "Perseverance furthers."This is because the path is zigzag, slow, and painstaking. He is faced only with those fears that he is strong enough to handle; while he is challenged exactly to the limits of his ability, he is never challenged beyond it. In hindsight, this process seems totally logical, but while it is going on, the zig of this moment seems contradicted by the zag of the next.

In being taught in this manner over a period of years, students of the *I Ching* discover that the Sage has

been following what modern teachers would call a lesson plan. We find, for example, that during the early part of our self-development we were mainly concerned with the details of our relationship with the Sage, and the way the Sage has dealt with our various moods and attitudes. Later, we learned to apply these principles to our relationships with others.

Since the Sage teaches all lessons by suggestion, this requires that the student develop an open mind. The more structured our thinking, the more difficult it is for us to learn. If we try, for example, to read the *I Ching* language in a specific way, that is, only in a literal, or only in a symbolic way, we will not see that at one time it is literal, and at another time symbolic. We are trained, thus, to return to our original flexibility and openness. *Youthful Folly* (Hex. 4), line five, points to childlike folly as the optimum attitude if we are to hear and understand the Sages counsel. As the commentary to this line says, “an inexperienced person who seeks instruction in a childlike and unassuming way is on the right path, for the man devoid of arrogance who subordinates himself to his teacher will certainly be helped.” Through being intuitively open and aware we are drawn at one time to particular words and phrases in the oracle text as our message, and at another time to entirely different words and phrases. In this way we learn to listen and become attuned to the way something resonates (or fails to do so) within us, for it is by its resonance that we recognize something to be in harmony with our inner truth.

The images in each hexagram present analogies to the life situations in which we find ourselves. The suggestive quality of this imagery connects our conscious mind with this inner resonance, or intuitive awareness, and draws up from our subconscious the precise points the Sage would have us recognize. Thus, “crossing the great water” is no longer a literal and therefore purely mental reference to a trip (although in rare instances it may be), but a crossing, or getting past a moment in our life that is surrounded by danger, as in danger presented by our doubts and fears. We begin to see, through this kind of perception, that danger, as the *I Ching* tends to use that word, nearly always refers to an internally held fear or doubt that is capable of creating an objective danger in the outer world. The implication is clear that if we doubt or fear something, that doubt or fear is capable of externalizing itself into an actual event if we persist in holding to it. Another type of danger occurs when our will to go on is threatened, or when we shut down our perseverance, as for example, our belief in the potential of others, our trust in the Cosmos, or our caring, as when we give way to alienation and negation.

A problem that often occurs when we begin our *I Ching* session by asking a specific question, is that we tend mentally to try to fit the Sages reply into the narrow perimeters of our question. If our question is very broad, it may be necessary for the Sage to answer several other questions first. Given this possibility, we need to allow that the answer given is a preliminary answer to our question. When we first begin consulting the *I Ching* we do not realize that it invariably speaks on its own terms, and within the framework of its own values. Moreover, it speaks to the unspoken inner question we carry with us. Because it knows best what this question is, and how to guide the student through all the steps that will lead to his understanding it, the student will make far greater progress if he begins each session by merely asking, “Please help me to see and understand what I most need to know now.” He will make the best progress if he allows the imagery to penetrate on its own, and if he allows the meaning of the imagery to surface spontaneously by not trying to force the answer. The less he relies on his logical mind, and the more patient and accepting he is of the time required for the answer to penetrate, the more the suggestive (or resonant) part of his psyche is freed to surface. My experiences with the *I Ching* have led me to conclude that the Sage ignores our logical processes, precisely to develop our ability to recognize our innermost feelings. Likewise, it refuses to respond to any kind of pressure on the ego’s part to have a purely mental answer right now. Once we receive the correct answer, we often receive hexagrams such as

Possession in Great Measure (Hex. 14), that affirm that we have understood, or that the lesson has been completed.

In later years I have simply tossed three coins to determine whether or not I have correctly understood the lesson. In this method, receiving three heads means, “yes, completely,” two heads mean “yes, basically,” two tails mean “no, basically,” and three tails mean “no, completely.” In the latter, it may also mean I am on the wrong track with my inquiry, or that I do not understand. When a lesson is complete the Sage nearly immediately presents us with a new lesson. This process may go on for many years. In my own experience of consulting the *I Ching* nearly every day for 30 years, this rapid-fire rate has greatly decreased only very recently.

Although one might consult the Sage daily, a lesson often requires an entire week to complete. For example, a new lesson may begin with receiving *Difficulty at the Beginning* (Hex. 3), that speaks about the confusion at the beginning of a new lesson. At this point we have no idea what the new lesson is about, but we are soon confronted by an external problem; usually, this problem gives us a sense of urgency to find a solution, whereupon we are warned not to accept any solutions that suddenly come to mind, just to ease the pressure of ambiguity. We are urged, rather, to disengage from staring at the problem and to wait patiently; this disengagement allows the correct answer to appear as a clear insight into the problem. Often the problem is resolved by simply dispersing our inner doubt. Learning to wait in the correct attitude is often the whole point of the lesson, for once we adopt the correct attitude, the problem either becomes resolved, or moves to the next step of progress. Upon understanding the lesson we might get *The Gentle (Penetrating)* (Hex. 57), that signals that the correct idea has penetrated through to our consciousness.

The kind of slow self-development characteristic of being taught by the Sage is described in *Development* (Hex. 53): it is so slow as to be almost imperceptible. This pace is frustrating to the impatient ego, that ever seeks a straight-line to the goal, and an immediate comprehensive answer. That, however, is the entire purpose of the slow pace: to expose the impatience and arrogance of the ego together with its fears, presumptions, and doubts. The slow pace is also necessary because we are correcting problems at their roots, making the effect of our work far-reaching and permanent.

The Sages method of teaching through specific external situations is similar to the Zen *koan,* or puzzle, which can only be solved through intuitive insight. However, the problems put to us by the Sage are real life-situations that contain a certain amount of risk, so we feel emotionally jeopardized by them. The feeling of being emotionally jeopardized brings our fears and doubts to the surface of consciousness, where, if we stand up to them, they lose all power over us. They are, after all, only paper dragons. We further realize, once we take courage to stand up to them, that our true self can be relied on to do the right thing, and also that the Sage comes to our aid.

Taking the courage to stand up to our fears is similar to what I once saw in meditation as “free-falling,” and it yields enormous rewards. We learn, for example, that the Cosmos is not just a vague mental concept; through having contacted it directly, our whole being knows its reality The inner freedom and power that this knowing gives us over our cowardly ego, and the command we develop over our inferiors, enables us to possess and occupy our intrinsic space. The *I Ching* speaks of this victory over our fears in the second line of *The Army* (Hex. 7): “In the midst of the army. Good fortune. No Blame. The king bestows a triple decoration.” The commentary explains, “The leader should be in the midst of his army, in touch with it, sharing good and bad with the masses he leads. This alone makes him equal to the

heavy demands made upon him....The decorations he receives are justified, because...the whole army, whose center he is, is honored in his person."

The Sage teaches by a variety of means. Sometimes our readings are clear and obvious; sometimes they are obscure. During cloudy times we are meant to digest the images without understanding them; we simply allow them to soak into our subconscious. Later, a correct perception breaks through, sometimes just at the moment we need to know it. Because such a variety of means are used for communicating with us, we learn not to presume what the Sage is going to do or say, but to keep our minds open, alert, and unstructured.

Occasionally the Sage ignores all questions to prepare us for an imminently shocking situation. We later recognize that we were being given essential help to meet the difficult time. Such a situation happened once in our *I Ching* group that met regularly each week to consult and discuss the *I Ching*. It was the groups regular practice to cast a group hexagram. Usually at least one, but often several of those present recognized the hexagram as speaking particularly to them. This time, however, everyone felt puzzled. The line was,"He attains the way of heaven, success," from *The Taming Power of the Great* (Hex. 26). After everyone had pondered the matter for a while, the telephone rang. The caller was the mother of one of those present; she had just found her husband dead before the television set. The meeting broke up in shock, and some of the woman's friends accompanied her to her parents' house. After some time of grieving with her family in another room, the woman came to one of her friends and exclaimed radiantly, "Now I know what that line meant!" She said that while she was with her family, she had strongly felt the presence of her father, and that this had caused her to remember the line we had received; immediately, she knew that the message had been about her father; it made her elated, and gave her a profound sense of peace.

A hexagram may call for action. If we assume this indicates we should do something, the next hexagram may even warn us against doing anything. It is difficult to know what action is called for unless we construct enough hexagrams to allow the Sage to make the meaning clear. We are not yet aware that in *I Ching* terms, action often refers to making a decision to disengage, or withdraw, or to say a firm inner no to something that is incorrect, or indeed, to free ourselves from barriers we have erected, to respond with openness to another's sincerity. To act, therefore, often indicates being decisive against the pressure put upon us by our inferiors to act, or to discipline ourselves for listening to the negativism of the ego. The action called for in *Limitation* (Hex. 60) often concerns remembering our limits, as in not allowing ourselves to go toward another while they are still unreceptive. The hexagrams will guide us to understand the limitation we need, or indeed, that another needs. *Retreat* (Hex. 33) often indicates that we need to retreat from the temptation to engage in conflict with others, or in self-conflict. External action is not always incorrect, but it is certainly incorrect so long as we are emotionally engaged, or uncertain. We need to wait until we have attained a clear view of what the Sage has in mind; being possessed of clarity and objectivity leads to a just and correct response, one that will not engage inferior aspects in others.

A number of lines in hexagrams counsel us to disengage. Disengagement is not counseled as an end itself, but as a necessary step to obtain clarity. Certainly, so long as we remain emotionally engaged with a problem, we cannot see with clarity. Letting go of the struggle is the key to opening the part of the psyche that contains the answers. Often, what we must disengage from is a dim view of others, or from feelings of resistance to what is happening to us. Not resisting events, rolling with the punches, and non-doing is called *wu wei* in Chinese philosophical Taoism, and it means "to go with the flow."

At times we are prevented from understanding the hexagrams because we fear that they will require us to undertake something beyond our capabilities. Or, we suspect they might require something inappropriate of us. While our task may be difficult to accomplish, the Sage never leads us to attempt something that is beyond our capabilities or that is against our dignity. The Sage consistently directs us toward what is wholesome and good. The Sage would lead us to correct the societal thinking and conventions that prevent the deepest human needs (in particular, love) from being fulfilled. As our experiences confirm the goodness and greatness of the Sages wisdom and virtue time and again, our suspension of distrust gradually is transformed into a firm sense of trust. The firmness of our trust is what the *I Ching* calls the "power of inner truth." Being in possession of the power of inner truth, we influence others involuntarily toward the good. The fifth line of *Inner Truth* (Hex. 61) say's, "He possesses truth, which links together." This theme is discussed in *Enthusiasm* (Hex. 16), which says that enthusiasm "begins a movement that meets with devotion, thus carries all with it." The fourth line describes a man who "is able to awaken enthusiasm through his own sureness and freedom from hesitation.... He has no doubts and is wholly sincere," and therefore "he achieves great things."

Other obstructions to our understanding are due to untrue cultural precepts we hold. When we consult the Cosmic Teacher, we cannot expect to find that the values we have taken for granted as true are true from the Cosmic Viewpoint. Often the Sage will focus on a particularly decadent idea to which we cling. It is then that we receive the hexagram *Work on What Has Been Spoiled* (Hex. 18). This counsels us to search our minds to find and rid ourselves of a particular untrue, or spoiled idea that blocks our next step of progress. For example, we find that while, from the point of view of the *I Ching*, we are not obligated to like people, we are counseled to disperse our dislike of them. Similarly, we find that it is not only permissible, but it also is sometimes recommended to say no to someone on grounds of intuition alone, and that it is not necessary to have reasons for doing it. The idea that I had to have a reason for saying no caused me considerable trouble until the *I Ching* made me aware that it was good and correct to say simply, "that doesn't feel right for me," or when someone's ego was involved, to simply say no. I also learned that we do not owe people trust before they have established their trustworthiness; we owe them only an open mind until such time as they communicate that they can be trusted. They communicate their untrustworthiness to us either by outright expressions of insensitivity, or moral carelessness, or by feelings of caution they arouse in us. Even though we receive such warnings, the *I Ching* would not have us brand others permanently as untrustworthy people. Mentally fixing, or branding them, is what it calls "executing people." In *The Wanderer* (Hex. 56), it is said that penalties and lawsuits "should be a quickly passing matter, and must not be dragged out indefinitely. Prisons ought to be places where people are lodged only temporarily, as guests are. They must not become dwelling places."

Sometimes we experience what can only be called a rude awakening, as when we press our views on others, or strive for personal gain, or interfere in other people's business, telling them what do to. Such actions violate the Cosmic Laws and are seen as arrogance at its worst. The rude awakenings are felt as various types of shock, or experienced as being placed in a humiliating position. We do not realize that it is a Cosmic Lesson until we consult the *I Ching* and receive a line such as the second in *Biting Through* (Hex. 21), which says, "...one encounters a hardened sinner, and, aroused by anger, one goes a little too far...there is no great harm in this, because the penalty as such is just." Receiving this line at a time when we have suffered feelings of humiliation indicates that the Sage has been punishing us.

There are times when our hexagrams call for making a 'sacrifice'. A sacrifice occurs when we give up feelings to which we feel entitled, such as anger, impatience, or vindictiveness. Such sacrifices are called for especially when another person is committing injustices, and our feelings of anger are justified.

Through relinquishing our belief that we have a right to these feelings, we 'give the matter over to the Cosmos'. Selflessly given up, these are the "offerings" referred to in the *I Ching* text; they have the correct effect, and are nourishment that emanates from humans to the Cosmos, as is explained in the general text of *The Ting* (Hex. 50). After making them, we let go and retreat into neutrality and reserve. This causes the offender to feel a sense of shame, because our neutrality acts as a mirror in which he sees his act in its true light. It further gives him time to reflect, and space to retreat from evil. For ourselves, being freed of the grip of our emotions makes it possible to see the situation objectively; that is, we see the other's true self in the grip of his ego's dominance. Then it is possible to say, in a detached and correct way, the firm kind of inner no that while it does not let him off the hook of his mistake, still does not execute his true self.

Acting in this way is to keep in harmony with the Tao. Keeping in harmony with the Tao is also to keep free from the Fate that comes of becoming entangled with someone elses incorrect action. Keeping disengaged, we do not interfere with the circular motion of Fate; thus we allow the negativity of the others action to go back to him. This also is to act in harmony with the Tao, for only when a persons Fate returns to him is he faced with the necessity to correct himself. When this begins to happen, we may receive the third line in *Standstill (*Hex. 12), that says, "They bear shame...inferior people who have risen to power illegitimately do not feel equal to the responsibility they have taken upon themselves. In their hearts they begin to be ashamed, although at first they do not show it outwardly. This marks a turn for the better."

In keeping with the spirit of relinquishing what is untrue to our nature, it is necessary to make sure our inferiors are not allowed to watch the offending person to see if he is improving, for it is the measuring and interfering of the ego that blocks the corrective action of Fate. Blocking the action of Fate, in certain instances, lets the other off the hook of his mistake. This happens when we allow the ego to hold onto someone's incorrect action vindictively; the ego, as line three of *Biting Through* (Hex. 23) makes us aware, has not the right or authority to punish another's ego; its doing this prevents the other from returning to do the correct thing, because it is against his dignity to respond to the demands of the ego. As the fourth line of *Revolution* (Hex. 49) says, "Radical changes require adequate authority. A man must have inner strength as well as influential position. What he does must correspond with a higher truth and must not spring from arbitrary or petty motives; then it brings great good fortune. If a revolution is not founded on such inner truth, the results are bad, and it has no success. For in the end men will support only those undertakings which they feel instinctively to be just."

Sacrificing feelings of having rights and being entitled to justice does not mean that we "forgive and forget," but that we withdraw from our dark feelings and our resistance to what is happening. We remain aware that incorrect behavior may recur so long as the offending person lacks the insight, and therefore the volition, to correct his fault. Through withdrawing into neutrality (after having said our inner no), we preserve our dignity and purity, and give the other person's superior nature support for rescuing himself.

On consulting the Sage regularly, we become aware we are communicating with an entity that is consistent in its way of relating to us. We also see that it relates in such a way as to constantly preserve its own dignity and correctness. If we ask questions and then dismiss its advice, it will soon communicate that we, in being insensitive, cause harm, and that it can only give itself fully and freely when we are open and sensitive. (See *Decrease*, Hex. 41, line one.)

Even though we are aware of the Sage's distinct personality, any wish on our part to assign an identity meets with its resistance. We are eventually forced to recognize that in its glory-seeking, the ego wants to

be God's right hand man, if not God himself. The Sage wants nothing to do with the elitism of the ego. If we can content ourselves with not identifying the Sage as other than our Cosmic Teacher, we can come into harmony with the Cosmic Viewpoint. As Lao Tzu said, "The Tao can be talked about, but not the Eternal Tao. Names can be named, but not the Eternal Name."

The Sage will answer our questions, but not in terms that would in anyway compromise its principles. For instance, it we ask questions about sex, the answer will not come in those terms. Instead, it speaks of "fellowship with men" as a general principle, causing us to contemplate the essentials of correct relationships, and of the "beard on the chin" as a vanity to which we pay attention, as opposed to the chin as the more essential thing. Gradually, we understand that we are not to think of sex as a thing in itself, but as an ornament of a more important and carefully developed relationship, that has all the essentials of equality, justice, and sensitivity fully in place. Moreover, in our conduct, we are to reserve giving ourselves until the basis of equality and justice is firmly established. Our firmness in adhering to this standard of conduct is to "draw out the allotted time' described in the fourth line of *The Marrying Maiden* (Hex. 54). To give ourselves on the basis of desire when these essentials are not securely in place is to be enslaved by our own inner weakness. From the Cosmic Viewpoint, sex as a thing in itself is a vanity created bv the ego-self-image, and indulgence in it, for its own sake, is a form of narcissism unworthy of being noticed by the Sage. This is not to imply that sexual nourishment is unimportant; the opposite is true when it is integrated with the love, respect, and equality that complete the Cosmic requirements of relating indicated throughout the *I Ching*. The *I Ching*, to be sure, is a manual for relating, for it views the correct working of relationships to be the very essence of what is in harmony with the Cosmos.

The Sage is polite, but firm in stating Cosmic principles. Through its firmness and consistency it emerges as a total personality that is gentle, kind, firm, and correct—one that above all believes in our potential to grow and manifest our true natures. It waits while we exhaust our enthusiasm for false ideas; it allows us to self-destruct if we stubbornly insist upon doing it, but would rather we did not because, as it tells us, we have the potential for achieving something both great and permanent for the good of all, if we will but be true to ourselves.

In working with the Sage we feel its nourishing, helpful presence. When we become arrogant, however, this presence departs and we begin to feel lonely. We are hardly aware of this presence until we lose it. When we return to our path, the presence gradually returns. It is as if an inner light comes on and goes off. By its coming and going, it teaches us about itself and about our relationship with it. It makes itself felt as a Cosmic Presence.

A number of hexagram lines in the *I Ching* refer to times when we deviate from our path and lose the feeling of the Sages presence. We receive these lines when we have begun to feel this loss. The first line in *The Well* (Hex. 48) says, "If a man wanders around in swampy lowlands, his life is submerged in mud. Such a man loses all significance for mankind. He who throws himself away is no longer sought out by others. In the end no one troubles about him any more." The sixth line in *The Wanderer* (Hex. 56) says, "The bird's nest burns up," referring to having lost the Sage's helpful protection, because we insist on leading rather than following. Other hexagram lines refer to our return to the path and the consequent return of the presence. The fourth line in *Return* (Hex. 24) says, "A man is in a society composed of inferior people, but is connected spiritually with a strong and good friend, and this makes him turn back alone. Although nothing is said of reward and punishment, this return is certainly favorable, for such a resolve to choose the good brings its own reward." The fifth line of *Grace* (Hex. 22) says similarly, "A

man withdraws from contact with people of the lowlands, who seek nothing but magnificence and luxury, into the solitude of the heights. There he finds an individual to look up to, whom he would like to have as a friend. But the gifts he has to offer are poor and few, so that he feels ashamed. However, it is not the material gifts that count, but sincerity of feeling, and so all goes well in the end."

By developing ourselves, the *I Ching* says we are also building a home and position of importance in the inner world. *The Wanderer* (Hex. 56) concerns our lonely inner world existence in which we are without friends and connections, but if we relate properly we "find friends who recommend us," and we enter the "service of a prince" who "accepts us," and "confers an office" upon us. Whenever we leave the path, though, "the wanderer's inn burns down." We are never quite secure in this strange land.

Still another aspect of our relationship with the Sage is our tendency to depart from the path, and then to return to it. We go to the Sage because we need help, but after being helped, we begin to feel we no longer need the Sage. Then we forget to work on our self-development, and we forget that self-development is the important task of our life. Or, we leave the path because each new lesson is difficult. With each new lesson there is the feeling of risk, as in learning to fly an airplane. One is glad to have the plane safely back on the ground and tied down. We are not sure we want the next lesson, because we know that each new lesson exposes us to dangers for which we must develop adequate responses. This process is like learning how to stall a plane and start the engine in midair, and learning how to slip sideways and how to spin, and how to come out of a spin. Self-development requires simulating all sorts of dangerous situations in order to know how to deal with them safely. These situations disturb our center of gravity and we suffer from the tensions and danger. We often want to pause in our progress, or even quit, relax, and enjoy things. We look forward to the time when it will no longer be necessary to take risks. However, when we stay in the same place, we stagnate and forget the purpose of our journey to wholeness. Indolence takes over, we deviate from our path and become self-indulgent; losing our seriousness of purpose, we then begin taking up other peoples space. The Sage, meanwhile, realizes that we will deviate. The Sage knows how to wait. If we totally lose the way, it is entirely up to us to return. When we do return, we find that the Sage is pleased. In following this path, the Sage has withdrawn from the ego in us, without giving up on us. By holding to our potential for good, the Sage draws us to return. We may find ourselves gently chided by line three of *Return* (Hex 24): "There are people of a certain inner instability who feel a constant urge to reverse themselves. There is danger in continually deserting the good because of uncontrolled desires, then turning back to it again because of a better resolution. However, since this does not lead to habituation in evil, a general inclination to overcome the defect is not wholly excluded.' We begin to see, by leaving the path and returning to it, the reliability, the absolute steadiness, and unfailing caring of the Sage.

Through coming to know the Sage, we find that the Sage plays no favorites. We are never allowed to skip steps in our development, nor are we exempted from learning any lessons because they are hard, or from correcting any mistakes. Unlike our human teachers who, because they fall prey to our charm or our devices sometimes give us advantages we do not deserve, the Sage is unfailingly just. No bargains are made to get us to rescue ourselves, or others, or to try to get us to do a good job. We are not even pitied when we feel self-pity. If we feel grief, we are counseled, "give preponderance to grief." We will be helped, but we will not be coddled. In this way we learn one of the great lessons of the *I Ching:* to follow the good for no reason other than it is good, and because it corresponds with our true nature.

In time we come to abandon the path less often in any substantial way. With big problems out of the way we then deal with smaller faults that diminish our inner strength. The way of the Sage gradually becomes

our way, and we learn to rely on the effects that correctness produce in our lives.

The relationship between the Sage and ourselves is that of teacher and pupil, leader and follower, but also friend. As master, the Sage reflects to us the presence of the ego in us through the principle of advance and retreat: When the ego is dominant, the Sage retreats; when our true self leads (we are modest and unassuming), the Sage comes to meet us halfway, and gives us a sense of being loved. Through this interaction we learn the correct way to relate to others. Thus the Sage, by believing in us and by giving us perfect freedom to come and go (to follow the good of our own volition), shows us how to believe in others, and to allow them to come and go. The mirror the Sage holds up to us is not the shiny mirror of vanity, in which we may admire and approve of ourselves, it is an opaque mirror that catches the shadow of the ego, in his dark hiding place within.

The Sage does not want us to be servile, so we are not told what to think, because we may learn to merely imitate goodness; we are only given hints. We must find out in our hearts what is truly good. This happens only through learning by experience. No doubt this way of teaching was the model for the Chinese masters who were said to have taught their students by giving them only a corner of the puzzle; the rest they had to fill in themselves. Although there is a difference between the Sage and us, it does not want us to kneel before it and worship it; we are led to preserve and guard our dignity—the essence of what we are, in our true selves. In a mediation experience I saw myself kneeling before the Sage, believing this must be proper. The Sage, however, gently took my hands, had me rise, and instructed me never to lose my inner dignity.

Footnotes

1. See the new method I have developed for clarifying the messages of the I Ching, described later in this book.

5. Self-Development

The purpose of the *I Ching* is to serve as a manual for self-development for those who would be its students. This means it is a manual for developing the true self within, fitting us to become active in the creative work of the world.

Self-development begins seemingly innocently and accidentally, but it is my experience that it comes as an opportunity to people who are ready and even hungry for it. As many people have reported to me, the *I Ching* comes to them at just the time they have needed it, and at the moment when they have been open to it.

The meaningfulness of this process was explained to me in a meditation I had in which I heard the words of a mathematical formula: "C=T squared." Then I heard the formula stated: “Change equals time squared.” Wondering why such words had come to me, I then saw a rock that was full of dangerous radioactivity that would take thousands of years to decay; it suddenly showed itself to have become harmless. Then I saw an enormous tobacco field covered with poles holding up tobacco cloth, such as the tobacco fields one saw in the Connecticut River Valley until recent times. Under the grid of poles and cloth the young tobacco plants were shielded from receiving too much sun. I was then made to realize that each pole signified a person who has come to the Sage to develop himself. Around each developed person were others whom he has influenced through being true to himself. Each developed person was responsible to relate correctly to the small circle of people around him. Then I saw that because all these developed people stood in a grid, the whole field became charged with energy, enabling their work to multiply the rate of change to an incredibly fast speed. Indeed, it was possible, because they were inwardly linked, to correct the threatening forces of decadence in the world in an amazingly short time This meditation convinced me that just such a process is now going on in the world, and that the people who have found themselves brought to the *I Ching* by such chance and invisible means, are those who were symbolized by the tent-poles in my meditation.

The influence that a follower of the *I Ching* has on those around him starts the moment he begins to develop himself for although he focuses only on keeping his inner thoughts and attitude correct, he is watched by the inner eyes of all who know him, and particularly by those with whom he has inner connections. He is meant to observe that when he thinks negative thoughts of others, they behave negatively and when he sees good in them they behave positively. Often, the new student of the *I Ching* does not want such responsibility and tries to shirk it, but as his inner wealth increases, he also begins to experience the blessings involved in having a beneficial effect on others, and on his world. However, he needs to be aware that the ego in him, on observing these effects, will try to claim that these effects are due to his having been “chosen” to lead and influence these others.

The student’s influence on others is his work, but he does not look for the work, it accompanies his daily life experience. It increases in variety and scope as his capabilities expand to handle it. At first, much of the work is of too simple and humble for him to recognize its importance, for invariably, the work is carried out on the mundane everyday level of existence. The challenge of how to relate to others, and to Nature in a way that is in harmony with the Cosmos, is his assignment. The circumstance might be a marital or a child-raising problem, or a problem in one’s love-relationship, or a money, or work-related problem, or a health problem. All of these everyday matters bring to the surface the hidden fears and

doubts of the ego that must be recognized if he is to conquer and be free of them.

During this time the student often feels useless because he does not understand why he is held in such a mundane position He further feels isolated, since the changes he is making within himself isolate him from friends who are not developing themselves. The fourth line in *The Well* (Hex. 48) comments on this training period: “In life there are times when a man must put himself in order. During such a time he can do nothing for others, but his work is nonetheless valuable, because by enhancing his powers and abilities through inner development, he can accomplish all the more later on.”

The *I Ching* makes it clear in *Gathering Together* (Hex. 45) that in the work of creating human unity, human leaders are necessary to serve within groups. Each leader “must first of all be collected within himself” Such a leader must have strength and constancy, and “work unselfishly to bring about general unity.” Because he sees with clarity what needs to be done, and is capable of helping others, he is given the task of achieving it in accord with the way the Cosmos works. As the fourth line of *The Ting* (Hex. 50) puts it, when we fail to go about this work in the correct way, “The legs of the *ting* are broken. The princes meal is spilled and his person is soiled. Misfortune.” The commentary explains, “A man has a difficult and responsible task to which he is not adequate. Moreover, he does not devote himself to it with all his strength but goes about with inferior people, therefore the execution of the work fails. In this way he also incurs personal opprobrium.” “Going about with inferior people” is a metaphor for harboring ideas and attitudes that are not in harmony with the Cosmos, and thoughts that slander others, Nature, or the Cosmos.

Leadership, in *I Ching* terms, is different from our typical Western view of what a leader is. Instead of hierarchical structures, in which the leader is on top as the boss, the father, the professor, or head of the firm, the *I Ching* makes us aware that there are *inner* leaders of groups. They are those who are most in touch with their inner truth. While people watch the obvious, or designated outer leaders with their outer eyes, they watch the inner leaders with their inner eyes to see how they respond to things.

To develop the attributes needed for this kind of leading, it is necessary for the conscious mind to keep in touch with, and follow ones deepest inner truth. The conscious mind, in this case, must take the position of the student, accepting that it does not know about the inner life. Knowledge is not of help in getting in touch with what we know within, since that is a “knowing” based on feelings: whether a thing or idea feels harmonious or disharmonious. When the conscious mind forms an accord with inner knowing, we are in harmony with ourselves. Then the effect we have on others is correct and harmonious. There is no need to say anything outwardly, because we say an inner No to the presence of the ego whenever it appears, both in ourselves and in others. Gradually, by freeing ourselves from faulty habits that mislead others, we gain a correct influence on those around us. Once our inner influence is established, we have the correct effect on those around us—our immediate family and friends—which is our correct sphere of influence. We likewise respond to whatever is brought to our attention in this way.

Our goal is not to attain a grand position of influence, but to ensure that the influence we have on others, and on the world around us, is always good. That is, we consistently do nothing to encourage or develop others’ egos, and we respond with openness and receptivity to their true selves. We do this by keeping ourselves in order; we keep aware and responsible for the contents of our thoughts, because it is our thoughts that nourish others on the inner plane. This awareness and responsibility is the essence of modesty.

The natural benefit of self-development extends outwardly to others with no intention on our part; our

vibrations and inner harmony are visible to those who are looking, with their inner eyes, for real solutions to their problems. Our determination and success are not missed by those who are seeking, with real sincerity, to find the way. The impact of our work spreads outward like ripples in a pool; it becomes multiplied thousands of times by others who, aided by our example and help, find the courage to correct themselves; this is how the world may be corrected.

In taking up the path of self-development we are made aware that the ordinary rules of life no longer apply. Conventional ways of influencing others, as by calling attention to our abilities, seeking prominent positions, or offering what we know, are abandoned. Abandoned, too, are our customary outer reactions to the ego behavior and mistakes of others, and to old kinds of defensive actions we might take to protect ourselves. Where we previously defended ourselves with arguments, or by using our legal rights to force others to perform their agreements with us, we are now restricted to non-ego means that are in harmony with the Cosmos: influencing and defending ourselves through modest actions, and following our inner truth. At first the ego in us sees this only as making ourselves defenseless and vulnerable, and as foolhardy. It would distract us from recognizing the force that is generated when we rely on inner truth. It denies that our consistency in being true selves penetrates to others with a good effect. Every time we abandon our inner truth and return to using power and defending ourselves by conventional means, we create problems for ourselves, which end in conflict and remorse. Our new path is that of the wanderer who (as described in *The Wanderer* (Hex. 56)) makes his way through the world as a stranger. “When a man is a wanderer and stranger, he should not be gruff or overbearing. He has no large circle of acquaintances, therefore he should not give himself airs. He must be cautious and reserved; in this way he protects himself from evil. If he is obliging towards others, he wins success.”

The way of the wanderer is that of the true self, which does not rely on logically derived thought, nor on wit, sharpness, or cleverness. The true self does not need to prove its superiority in debate, or engage in verbal conflict, although it responds when sought out. Even then, the true self finds no need to defend its views; it simply holds to them; it has no need to put the intellect or what it has learned forward; nor does it strive to impress others with ones accomplishments. If sought out by someone sincerely, it responds without false modesty or intention. It avoids the conscious and intentional effort that is called brilliance in the *I Ching*, and shuns the ‘high road' of pomposity, clinging instead to sincerity and humility. The true self waits until events call it into action; it relies on what spontaneously comes to mind at the moment. Its simplicity and humility are what the *I Ching* calls “true grace.”

It sounds as if such characteristics are not attainable, or if attainable, cannot be maintained. Indeed, they are not to be attained, at all. They are the result of taking away the conditioning that prevents us from being who we really are: our true selves. Perfection and “becoming something” is not sought; only an effort to keep sincere and free of the egos bravado and presumption. Once uncovered from the inner prison created by the development of the ego, we find that the true self does not follow rules. It responds rather to the need of each particular situation from an inner knowing of what is harmonious and correct for that unique circumstance. It also knows it will make mistakes, therefore it does not allow the ego to whip it in self-reproach, when mistakes have been made.

The image of the figure-eight mentioned earlier is a helpful model to keep one balanced in relating to others. Keeping in mind the idea that one half of the figure-eight represents you, and the other half everyone else, you do not allow people to encroach unwanted into your space, and you do not encroach into theirs. They are always only guests in your space, and you are a guest in theirs, with the place where the two circles meet being an attitude of neutrality. In validating our intrinsic space, we are taking

responsibility to answer to the Cosmos for the decisions in our lives. It must be held true that giving this responsibility over to anyone else, as to an organization, is a misguided tradition; no one—husband, priest, friend, parent—can really free us from our private responsibility to the Cosmos. It is ours alone. When we truly understand this, and respect that our primary duty is to be loyal to our inner truth, others cannot so easily throw us off balance.

The figure-eight model also helps us understand the *I Ching's* counsel against “throwing oneself away” (see *Decrease*, Hex. 41, line two). This is not to say we cannot share our space, or even open it up completely to the one we love, as indeed we also might with the Sage, whom we trust, but we can do this only when the other has completely earned our trust by respecting our right and duty to be responsible to our own inner truth. This principle is violated when we or another invades or encroaches into this space, as when we tell them what to do, or push where there clearly is resistance. To refrain from such actions is to respect both another’s dignity and our own. People who are in love open their spaces to each other voluntarily and spontaneously. Trouble occurs when either begins to tolerate expectation or demand, by not retreating; however close, however well established the trust between us may be, we are still in another’s space by invitation only. No one is able, at all times, to keep his inner space open to another. It is necessary, therefore, that each be sensitive to and respectful of times when the other needs to be alone in his space; it is similarly necessary to respect each others right to make his own decisions.

The figure-eight also fits the *I Ching* counsel to be firm in our principles when people carelessly and insensitively encroach into our space; we retreat into an attitude of reserve and inner neutrality, after saying an inner no. If the inner no is not soon heeded, as when the person is blatantly stepping on our toes (the other needs to be given a little time, when the overstepping is verbal, to absorb the feeling that accompanies inner withdrawal), a firm outer no needs to be said as well. (When in doubt, one may toss three coins for the answer.) We also withdraw eye-to-eye contact if their ego tries to engage us in reacting. Retreating gives the other an inner message which bypasses his ego, that arbitrary and insensitive behavior is neither to be accepted nor tolerated. This is in accord with the fourth line of *Work on What Has Been Spoiled* (Hex. 18) that says, “Tolerating what has been spoiled...in continuing one sees humiliation.” Respecting another’s intrinsic space is, in my experience, more than just an inner discipline, it is a loving act, for love is respect; it is respecting others’ complete freedom to come toward us or to go away from us, without our inwardly closing our hearts. It is to respect their freedom to follow their inner truth. This attitude is described in *Holding Together* (Hex. 8), line five, as “kingly,”: “There is depicted here a ruler, or influential man, to whom people are attracted. Those who come to him he accepts, those who do not come are allowed to go their own way. He invites none, flatters none, all come of their own free will....The same principle of freedom is valid for life in general. We should not woo favor from people. If a man cultivates within himself the purity and strength that are necessary for one who is the center of fellowship, those who are meant for him come of their own accord.” This line demonstrates how the Sages integrity is a model for how we are to relate to others.

By being guided by the Sage, each confrontation with our fears and doubts occurs in such a manner that we are able to defeat them. The fourth line *of Development (Hex*. 53) compares being confronted with difficult situations, to the wild goose: “If it is clever, it will find a flat branch on which it can get a footing. A mans life, too, in the course of its development, often brings him into inappropriate situations, in which he finds it difficult to hold his own without danger. Then it is important to be sensible and yielding. This enables him to discover a safe place in which life can go on, although he may be surrounded by danger.” This counsel teaches the student that if he will respond to the situation in the manner of the cautious and conscientious wanderer, he will find the help he needs to deal with all

situations. This help comes from the Cosmos and is available because he takes the courage to rely on it. Very often the solution comes only at the very last minute, but always at the "right" time.

Self-development is like peeling off extraneous layers of clothing. Extraneous are those pacts we have made to respond to things in a certain way, and all programmed responses. As we give up these planned defenses against what "might happen," we feel exposed and at risk, but when, as a consequence, we experience being protected by the Cosmos, that feeling goes away. Having previously been taught to anticipate problems by planned responses, we now only prepare ourselves to find the "flat branch" mentioned above, on which we can rest, and where our principles can remain intact. In the game of tennis, advanced players are trained to develop responses that have the greatest chance of winning, i.e., under certain conditions it is considered best to serve down the line, or to return the ball cross-court. However, when players adhere to these strategies as fixed rules, their responses become 'grooved', or set, making it simple for the player who does not allow himself to become grooved, to remain flexible and inventive. This allows him to beat the grooved players.

The student of the Sage learns to recognize the fixed programs of the ego, and to keep his mind open and unstructured. He turns his attention to the needs of the moment, and to the problems upon which he can actually have some impact. This attitude is freed of the doubt implied in *looking ahead* with dread, whereby we barricade ourselves against what might happen, and in *looking aside,* whereby we enviously compare our situation with others, and in *looking behind,* to measure our progress. These sorts of fearful, doubtful looking, which the ego constantly engages in, are regarded as nourishing ourselves on inferior food in the hexagram *Nourishment* (Hex. 27). Worse, such looking has the bad effect of pulling us off our inner center, making us unstable, and causing us to lose our path. A stable attitude is created by an open mind that does not rely on prefixed ideas that are based on fear and doubt. It is cautious without being closed, similar to that of the pilot of an airplane: Even if his airplane is new and has been repeatedly tested for failure, he neither assumes that it is flight-worthy or is not flight-worthy. He completes his preflight check, which is based on caution and commonsense. During his flight he maintains this cautious and watchful mind. He knows and is aware of the dangers that unexpected conditions can bring, but at the same time, he is neither anxious nor fearful. He is still able to enjoy the pleasant moments of his experience.

The fourth line of *Inner Truth* (Hex. 61) warns that looking aside can cause the "team horse" to "go astray." By watching our teammate's progress, we do not walk our own path well. Moreover, watching another's progress comes from our doubt that they can grow and change by themselves. This doubt is an unnecessary burden we put upon them, which impedes their progress. Moreover, our impatience is also a doubt that the Cosmos will work things out. Because inner watching is founded on doubt, it causes us to want things to be better, and all wanting disturbs our inner equilibrium. If we were to see ourselves wanting in meditation, we would see that we look like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, leaning toward that which we want and desire, instead of being straight, centered, and at rest within. The source of inner strength lies in being harmonious within oneself.

Our true self looks only at what is immediately before it. Looking aside, in the negative way mentioned, is the activity of the ego. When we watch another persons behavior, four things may be observed: (1) If they seem to be escaping the bad consequences of doing something wrong, the ego enviously complains, saying that Fate, or life, is unfair; after all, *we* cannot get away with such things. It cries out to take matters in hand to *do something* to right matters. Its disbelief in the ability of the Cosmos to help us causes our inferiors to feel isolated, and to panic, and think of leaving the path of following our inner truth. The ego

encourages such reactions by saying, "following inner truth does no good." Such undermining thoughts need to be dealt with by a firmly said inner no. (2) The ego will also try to barter, agreeing to comply with our command if it can see a noticeable change in the others behavior. When progress remains unobservable (on its time table), it boisterously rebels. This rebellion of the ego must be firmly resisted by the true self. (3) Because the ego demands that the other person conform to its expectations, the other person is prevented from responding, simply because it is against that person's dignity to heel to the demands of the ego. Thus, the presence of the ego actually prevents what we want to happen. (4) The egos threatening that it will leave the path is aimed at the Sage. Threatening the Sage causes the Sage to retreat, as the Sage must, when the ego seizes leadership in this manner. All such problems are most easily corrected at the very beginning, when we are first tempted to look aside to see what other people are doing.

Sometimes a persons ego may behave badly in order to get us to look at him, in the very same manner that the ego in ourselves tries to command our attention. Giving it our attention further energizes and feeds his ego, making him feel powerful and alive. We need to stay detached and neutral, keeping our bodily inferiors disciplined neither to interact nor to complain; in this way we do not play the ego's game, and we keep the ego in ourselves from rising to power. The *I Ching*, in *Dispersion* (Hex. 59), speaks of dispersing feelings of alienation and anger, and of sacrificing these feelings for the good of the situation. Imagining ourselves "dispersing hardening feelings" helps us deal with situations of this kind.

Another danger exists in stopping to *look at* the situation we are in, as when we congratulate ourselves on our success, or when we despair because of apparently insurmountable difficulties. The remedy here is to reject the ego's bravado at winning, and its despairing when things are bad. Merely entertaining its perspective of the situation is unbalancing. We need to recognize that such efforts of the ego to stir up the inferiors are aimed at its resuming leadership of our personality. It tries to present itself as the only one who is able to make things happen. We defeat these wiles of the ego when we reject its criticism of our true self. Sorrowful self-criticism and self-pity are also among the tricks of the ego to put the blame for its failures on the true self.

We defeat such wiles of the ego when we recognize and accept that making mistakes is absolutely necessary to self-development. The *I Ching* makes it clear in *Youthful Folly* (Hex. 4) that we cannot expect to know everything about the inner world in advance. It is immodest to expect too much at once, it is said in *Duration* (Hex. 32). To wrestle with a fate that has been years in the making, is the challenge of a blind and lame man, as we are reminded in *Treading* (Hex. 10). This hexagram also counsels "simple progress" in line one. We need only keep steadily on the path, without measuring ourselves against some preconceived image of ability or inability, or of perfection or imperfection. Our job is neither to be perfect nor to be consistently free of blame. As it is put in the sixth line of *Contemplation* (Hex. 20), "The Superior Man knows how to *become* free of blame," not to *be* free of blame. Only the ego seeks to be perfect.

When we see that because of our mistakes we have slipped backward, losing the ground we have so carefully gained, our inferiors become alarmed and pride is aroused. Thinking they have truly tried to be conscientious, they now become vulnerable to the ego, which suggests that all their efforts to be disciplined have been "for nothing." It is during such times that we receive the *I Ching* counsel to "be modest about our modesty," to forgo pride and to return to the path. Everyone who has ever been on the path has had to learn how to return, in spite of pride, and without any reason whatever; doing so is simply being true to oneself.

As mentioned earlier, putting our principles to work in stressful situations seems to be the only way we can transform what we have learned through the intellect into knowledge of the heart. Only by being resolved to say the inner No and to ask for Cosmic help during emotionally jeopardizing situations, can we experience the results and help that give the strength to our inferiors that they need, to grow up. Perhaps this is why Lao Tzu spoke of “prizing adversity,” and the subsequent joy of becoming free of it. *The Taming Power of the Great* (Hex. 26) refers to the repeated practice of finding our way through stressful situations as practicing “chariot driving.” *Looking behind* has all the faults of *looking ahead, looking aside,* and *looking at* our situation. Then the ego tends to encroach by looking back over our work. Wherever it sees success, it attempts to give the credit to itself as the element that, by virtue of its intelligence, bravery, wit, cunning, or whatever, is responsible. Wherever it sees failure, it attempts to put the blame on the “stupidity” and “incompetence” of the true self and on its “gullibility” for relying on the Cosmos. If we tolerate this kind of vain self-congratulation by failing say No to it, we find that our progress deteriorates, and we are confronted with more difficulties. If we then recognize these tactics of the ego and abandon them, we find ourselves aided by the Cosmos, and the pressure of the situation eased. It is then that we may receive the warning given in *After Completion* (Hex. 63), to be aware that once the pressure caused by adversity begins to ease, the ego will seek to return in the form of a renewed self-confidence. If we are already aware and on guard against this aspect of the ego, it will try the more subtle approach of suggesting that “we overestimated the difficulty of the situation...it would have got better on its own.” All such suggestions seek to diminish the abilities of the true self, and to deny that it is our cooperation with the Cosmos that has produced the successes. The ego likewise denigrates everything in our attitude that is truly modest and conscientious—the elements that enable us to attain the help of the Sage and the Cosmos. The sixth line of *After Completion* warns us against such self-confidence: “After crossing a stream, a mans head can get into the water only if he is so imprudent as to turn back....There is a fascination in standing still and looking back over a peril overcome. However, such vain self-admiration brings misfortune. It leads only to danger, and unless one finally resolves to go forward without pausing, one falls a victim to this danger.” The correct attitude is described in the sixth line of *Possession In Great Measure* (Hex. 14): “In the fullness of possession and at the height of power, one remains modest and gives honor to the Sage who stands outside the affairs of the world. By this means one puts oneself under the beneficent influence descending from heaven, and all goes well.”

Other aspects of looking behind are discussed in the third and fifth lines of *After Completion* (Hex. 63). The third line gives the analogy of the Emperor Wu Ting's having “waged long colonial wars for the subjection of the Huns who occupied the northern borderland with constant threat of incursions.” The commentary stresses that “a correct colonial policy is especially important. The territory won at such bitter cost must not be regarded as an almshouse for people who in one way or another have made themselves impossible at home, but who are thought to be quite good enough for the colonies.” Applied to personal affairs, the lesson is that if, after we have corrected our relationship with another person by strictly avoiding arguments, we then engage in arguing with him, the ego rules once more. We may not, through failing to resolutely say no to such encroachments of the ego in us, allow it to reassert itself.

The fifth line of *After Completion* speaks further about the temptation, once we have made a relationship correct (through maintaining reserve and saying no to what is incorrect), to reconsider and think we have been too hard. This is yet another tactic of the ego. Losing our firmness in this way is what this line refers to as “magnificence.” It is magnificence to let others off the hook of their mistakes. We do this when we fail to say the inner No, or fail to retreat into reserve when there has been an encroachment. Or, when we see that they are feeling regret, we try to make it easy for them to return, as by saying, “oh, it was no problem.” It brings delight to the ego, when it hears us dismiss the seriousness of its encroachment. It is

important to allow the other to find their own way of correcting their mistakes. We need to realize that such magnificence comes from the ego in us. It has been waiting on the side for the unpleasantness of the situation to subside, so that it can be magnanimous in victory, or indulge in pleasures missed. It is luxurious to pretend we can grant pardons when we do not have the right to do it, or to “grant favors”; to do so is to play God.

Even it we do not adopt such grandiose attitudes, we tend, once a person begins to relate correctly to us, to let go of the firm attitude that has corrected the situation. The third line in *Grace* (Hex. 22) calls this “sinking into convivial indolence.” We need to remain inwardly firm about what is correct. Then, if the others ego regains the confidence to reassert itself, we do not wait an instant to step back into reserve. As the second line of *Enthusiasm* (Hex. 16) says, “The Superior Man does not wait a whole day.” It really means, he does not wait one hour, or even one minute, to retreat. Retaining the correction that has been made in the relationship depends on ones inner firmness. The fifth line in *Biting Through* (Hex. 21) says, in regard to dealing with the ego in another, “The case to be decided is indeed not easy but perfectly clear. Since we naturally incline to leniency, we must make every effort to be like yellow gold—that is, as true as gold and as impartial as yellow, the color of the middle [the mean]. It is only by remaining conscious of the dangers growing out of the responsibility we have assumed that we can avoid making mistakes.” The ego in others (as in ourselves), and the habits of mind it has created, are not changed in a day. Before we can let go of our reserve completely, the person must have truly and permanently corrected his attitude, from his own insight and volition. We can fairly well believe that, despite Dickens’ characterization, Scrooge did *not* permanently correct his attitude overnight.

The same observations may be made about extending trust to others. A complete trust in others is not something we have a right to grant. While we are making changes in ourselves we notice many vacillations in ourselves: we first listen to the ego, then later “return to the way.” It is no different with the people on whom we have an influence, through our correct responses. They, too, will vacillate between making an effort to correct themselves, and listening to the ego. So long as they make an effort to correct themselves, it is necessary to endure this movement back and forth until the change is truly established. It is in just this way that the Sage, our teacher, has endured such vacillations in us. Similarly, when another has made an effort to establish his trust, it is incorrect to withhold trust. After having had two customers in my business who cheated and caused me to lose good deal of money, I found myself being extra guarded with the next customer who came into my office, even though it was immediately obvious that he was cooperative and responsible in money matters. Nevertheless, I was determined, as a matter of policy, to put everyone under the same intense scrutiny This made him comment, “If you are as suspicious of all of your customers as you are of me, I wonder that you have any customers.” It was a humiliating lesson that proved to me that trust is to be granted to people who forthrightly and without reservation establish their creditworthiness. Trust, likewise, is to be withheld from those who make no effort to establish it.

One of the persistent difficulties encountered in self-development is that of overcoming the comfortable easiness of following convention. To be sure, a good deal of our resistance comes from the *death threat* that we experience in early childhood, that has been used to make us conform. Here, however, I speak of the *comfort* of indolence, of not making a final move toward growth and self-knowledge. At first glance, the reason for this resistance seems to be simple laziness. However, a closer look reveals the presence of the ego. To give example, for the first two years that I consulted the *I Ching,* I was helped miraculously and enormously; despite this fact, and the constant proof I experienced that it was reliable and wholly good, I maintained a level of distrust. It was an arrogant 'show me before I believe in you’ attitude. Then one day the *I Ching* stopped being of help altogether. Not only did the hexagrams no longer apply to my

situations, I began to feel abandoned by the presence of the Sage. Ironically, it was upon having this feeling of abandonment that I began to realize how much it had been there, beside me, in a loving way. Searching for the answer, the *I Ching* remained unfathomable and aloof, which was mirrored in the fifth line of *Preponderance of the Small* (Hex. 62), which I received. This line says, "Dense clouds, no rain from our western territory. The prince shoots and hits him who is in the cave." The clue to my problem, which I did not then understand, lay in the commentary: "A born ruler...cannot achieve anything or confer blessing on the people because he stands alone and has no helpers. In such times [he] must seek out helpers...but these helpers must be modestly sought out in the retirement to which they have withdrawn." The meaning did not become clear until in meditation I saw myself learning to swim as a child. I heard the instructor say, "You have learned and practiced all the steps needed for swimming; now it is time to push off and take your feet off the bottom." I immediately understood this to refer to the two rears in which the Sage had proven its trustworthiness, time and again; still, I was holding back only because of a comfortable indolence—an indolence held by the ego, which was pretending it was superior to the Sage, and that the Sage needed to prove itself. The proof it required, however, was impossible to give, a fact that the ego used to maintain its control over me. The answer was to rouse myself and to abandon distrust, despite its influence. As this example shows, the ego encourages us to see our old programmed habits of mind as "not so bad." It dismisses their destructiveness as "exaggerated." These, and the other doubts and fears it introduces, are not quiescent. They are fully powered, destructive forces. After firmly resisting and rejecting them, we need to be vigilant against their return and resolute against all their rationales. Indolence is simply a good face the ego puts on its bad habits of mind, to get us to leave it intact.

Preponderance of the Small (Hex. 62) is a hexagram that deals with small and insidious pressures put on us by the ego to decide something, especially when situations are ambiguous. "You must decide," it urges. Ambiguity places tremendous pressure on us to make some sort of move, simply to resolve the ambiguity. This hexagram counsels us to remain unmoved by this pressure, and to endure the ambiguity. *The Taming Power of the Great* (Hex. 26) gives counsel for dealing with this buildup of pressure: we hold firm and keep still within, letting the situation build without interfering. If we persevere in accepting each moment as it happens, the correct response spontaneously breaks through. This response is not only suitable to meet the ambiguous situation, it also has a perfect appropriateness that could not have been contrived through wit and cleverness. Such a response is described in the second line of *The Receptive* (Hex. 2) by the words, "Straight, square, great."

Only by keeping an open awareness are we able to recognize these voices of the ego and to quickly intercept its faulty ideas as they are put forward. Being attuned to the inner stillness, we immediately recognize whether an approaching thought is appropriate or not by its harmonious or disharmonious feeling. Only by this inner listening and feeling are we able to be aware of when ego elements are being introduced into our life situations. Then is the opportune time to reject the seeds of thought that give rise to disharmony in our lives. When we let the objectionable thing pass by, its danger is soon rationalized away by the ego, for indeed, it is the ego that allows the objectionable thing to pass by, and it is the ego that does not want to be seen as the cause of the trouble it has created. Every time that we allow something objectionable to pass by, our ability to feel disturbing resonances is weakened. This ability disappears in time through disuse, and we become entirely at the disposal of the ego.

At the beginning of our development we may have lost our ability to feel when a thing is harmonious or not, but with practice at inner listening, and with taking firm action to reject those disharmonious ideas we do hear, the ability to hear them gradually returns.

We are able to listen to these inner feelings only when we are free of the clamoring voices of the ego. This is why, in *The Clinging* (Hex. 30), it is said that we may attain clarity only by allowing ourselves to be docile and empty within. Looking and listening to the empty space within, we are both aware of the external world (in a detached way) and open to the Cosmos, where everything that we need, to understand our situation, is available to us.

Our original nature is like a well-built dory, capable of going through gigantic waves; however, through fear, we have added protective devices to it until it has become so weighted that the first storm is likely to swamp it. Cultural precepts founded on doubt and fear are like devices on the dory; they interfere with its natural design and obstruct the smooth, natural order of change. By adding the pretenses and defenses of the ego, our personality becomes fundamentally unsuited to the demands of life. These pretenses and defenses not only make us indifferent to others, but also they cause us to make demands, and to encroach on and take up other peoples physical and psychological space. When entire classes of society do this, widespread suffering results, as happened, for example, during the Inquisition, when the threat of death was leveled against anyone who did not accept without question the Roman Catholic Churchs view of what was right. The only remedy is for each person who sees the necessity for it, to undertake self-development. He then finds himself setting a beneficial example to every one he knows by how he meets each daily circumstance. By holding to simplicity and sincerity within himself and by respecting others' intrinsic space, he enables them to give up their defenses and pretenses. By trusting in and following his inner truth, he brings out others' true natures and helps them give up their fears.

Through self-development, our attitudes and our will are slowly re-attuned to our inner truth, hence to the Cosmic Will. Correct attitudes that have been weakened by fear, indifference, and indolence are revitalized and restored; we return to our original state of conscientiousness and sincerity. Developing our true nature is like tuning a piano to concert pitch after the pitch has sagged. The entire dynamics of the piano are lifted and harmonized. At first this puts great pressure on the strings and harp, so the work must be done slowly and carefully, allowing the new condition to settle.

By opening ourselves up to the Cosmos and its way, we begin to see how we are aided and defended by it. Our spontaneous responses prove surprisingly adequate to meet each situation. In watching and listening for the entrance of the ego in ourselves, with its dark-seeing, and its resistance to our efforts, we acquire a certain amount of inner seeing and hearing that we forgot was possible. Through dispersing negative attitudes, we learn to be alert to what we may learn in each situation. We may not have gone so far as to prize calamity, but we begin to be patient and attentive. By developing a careful conscientiousness, and avoiding losing our humility, as by thinking of ourselves as better or worse than others, we return to our natural modesty. We become attuned to the Cosmic gifts and help that are available, each and every moment in our lives. We begin to realize how simplicity, modesty, sincerity, and constancy penetrate to others on the inner level. By withdrawing from the ego-assaults of others, we learn to preserve our personalities. By coming to realize that egos have power only when they are able to arouse fears and doubts in us, we learn never to play the games that the ego in others initiates. When we do fall into the egos traps and engage in its conflicts or contests, we notice a loss of inner strength and inner peace that is so regrettable that we are ever less satisfied with indulging in them. Little by little, through such inner decisions, we authorize our native potentials to create a working personality that is attuned to the Cosmic Will, firm and strong in itself.

Perhaps it cannot be emphasized enough that the ego will arise again and again from its shallow grave to ask, "Is the ego all that bad?" Immediately, we need to answer it with a resolute and definitive yes, and

heap the dirt back on. We need to recognize that we are in a life and death struggle with it for control of the self. We need to understand this in all its implications it we are to resist it effectively, and if we are to be able to help ourselves and others during times when our inner light, or theirs, is severely darkened.

As we can see, self-development is a process by which we develop and strengthen native qualities that have long been neglected, or blocked altogether through allowing the ego to dominate. Not the least among these native qualities is a persons constant awareness of his dependence on the Cosmos. This awareness is coupled with the constant humility of gratitude. The gratitude meant, however, is not a self-satisfied counting of one's blessings, or a comparison of one's good luck with others, which would be a loss of modesty. In looking back, or aside, the ego tempts us to indulge in self-congratulation that we are not among the hungry, poor, or handicapped. True gratitude is thoroughly grounded in humility and in the recognition that the blessings and help of the Cosmos are there for all who have the humility to ask for help, and who work sincerely at rejecting the ego in themselves.

Another hallmark of the developed person is a conscientious avoidance of factionalism, as in becoming factional with people we prefer. Hexagram 59, *Dissolution,* counsels us to "dissolve your bond with your group." Following inner truth has nothing to do with belonging to a group that follows a prescribed, group way of thinking. Such groups can include the family, the clan, the race, and the nation with whom we identify ourselves. All these identities belong to the ego and are the sources of prejudice, conflict, and evil. In the same way, it is important not to fix ourselves inflexibly as being either a city person or a country person, or one who cannot live alone, or one who cannot live with anyone. All these and like factional attitudes come from rigid attachment to ideas that have to do with the ego-self-image, or vanity; they prevent us from being in harmony with the Cosmos. Vanity is present, too, when we prize the way we feel, or the way we think, as when we regard our good feelings about others as a magnificent gift we bestow upon them. In such subtle ways we lose our humility and adaptability to life. In correcting ourselves, we free ourselves from the petty likes and dislikes that the ego likes to hold onto. It is an important discipline to check ourselves from time to time to see if we have lost our humility. The ego will suggest, as a way of discouraging us, that this work is extreme and nitpicking. We need rather to find the commonsense in all these ideas that finds expression in a moderate, just, and detached point of view. Strangely enough, on attaining a detached view, the things we most enjoy begin to happen to us. It is as if having a viewpoint that is in harmony with the Cosmos changes the molecules all around us, altering reality as we know it. Or, perhaps it might be said, it is the way of the Cosmos, once we adapt to it, to make everything work.

From the Bottom of the Pit Up, Or, Awakening to the Inner Call to Self-Develop

For many of us, and perhaps especially for those of us who are led to become students of the Sage, there comes a time in life when the trap door of our certainties falls out from under us. Up to this moment everything seems to have been successful, but suddenly we feel different. For example, our customary ways of relating to situations suddenly stop working. Contemplating the causes, we find it difficult to assign reasons. Strangely, up to this moment we seemed to have attained a high point of self-assurance that we had put things into their proper perspective; now, our will to go on has fallen to its lowest point ever.

We scarcely recognize that the crisis has been precipitated by the sudden realization, on the part of our true self, that the things that really matter to it are not going to happen, and that we have been in error

about our assessment of what is important. The ego, likewise, sees that it is not going to attain the immortality and heroic fame it sought; it also sees that it risks being seen as the culprit, the one whose point of view is deficient This is when it prefers a suicide of the spirit to being displaced as leader of the self.

The *I Ching* calls this a state of exhaustion. The hexagram *Oppression (Exhaustion)* (Hex. 47) compares our state to a lake that has dried up. This is a dangerous state because the power of the ego has reached its zenith in our life, and its dominance over our will can cause us to commit the suicide that it constantly advocates in the implied threat of the spoiled child, which says, "If I can't have things my way, I won't go on."

It is not an accident that we have arrived at such a place within ourselves, for as it is put in the commentary to the top line of *Darkening of the Light* (Hex. 36), "The dark power at first held so high a place it could wound all who were on the side of the good and of the light. But in the end it perishes of its own darkness, for evil must itself fall at the very moment when it has wholly overcome the good, and thus consumed the energy to which it owed its duration."

This state may have coincided with an external shock such as a death, or a divorce, or the sudden decrease of one's self-image, as may happen after being fired from a job, or being incurably injured in an accident. Any of these situations may suddenly show the true self the emptiness of the egos bravado, and the superficiality of the goals it has pursued through half a lifetime. Exhaustion of our will to live may cause illness—a giving up that ends in cancer, or other disease. We may allow a death of the will to happen if we make no effort to resist the ego's thrusting its failures off onto the true self. This happens when we believe the ego's claim that we are powerless against it. By asking the Cosmos for help, the ego's claims are exposed as false, and a true way to go forward is found.

It is important to see that our general feelings, both of helplessness and hopelessness, are delusions foisted upon us by the ego within us. To make matters more difficult, our inferiors are frightened and vocal, taking up our inner space, preventing us from thinking or seeing with clarity.

Were we to see where we are in terms of the 'inner world', we would discover that we are trapped at the bottom of a dark, deep, dry well. The sides of the well are too slippery to climb out. Externally we may be ill, even within sight of physical death. The Sage, the Cosmic Teacher that is in everyone's presence, may be heard to say, "Do you want to live or not? You must decide."This may be followed by the admonition, "What about those who depend on you? How will they get along?"

Before we fell into this dark inner place, our external life seemed to go on almost too smoothly, and we seemed to have had an endless license to err. We may even have tested to see how far we could exercise our power and arrogance without incurring bad results. Now, everything we do has a penalty attached to it, as it we have lost our Cosmic Credit Card. We feel as if we are in a straightjacket, with no power at all over our external life. Our first response to this situation is like that of a spoiled child that hits its head against the wall on being thwarted. We first try to endure the situation, then we resist it. The struggle is very intense: to live or die, to continue or quit.

We discover that if we are to live, we must resolutely refrain from entertaining even the slightest thought that death or quitting might be a way out. We also must be resolute against the temper tantrums of our inferiors, which, in reaction to the dark view of life promoted by the ego, see the situation as a punishment for existing. They therefore throw themselves futilely against the irresistible limits in wave-like assaults.

At this point we tend to receive the *I Ching* line from *Darkening of the Light* (Hex. 36): "Darkening of the light as with Prince Chi." The commentary explains that "in order to escape danger" those who cannot "leave their posts in times of danger...need invincible perseverance of spirit and redoubled caution in their dealings with the world." The sixth line in *Limitation* (Hex. 60) explains that during such times, "galling limitation" may be "the only means of saving ones soul, that otherwise would succumb to irresolution and temptation." To be a student of the Sage, we also discover that if we are to live, we must make a commitment to serve our inner truth, for it is the only true guide for our lives.

The first thing needed to pull ourselves away from the brink of self-destruction, is to come to an effective way of combating the disease of wanting. Wanting leads us ever back into the pit of despair through its envious activity of comparing ourselves in an unreal way with others (i.e., their lives are going well, ours is not worth anything). If we consult the *I Ching* while indulging in wanting, we receive hexagrams and lines that try to make us aware of the destructive effects of wanting, and that suggest techniques for dealing with this addictive component of the ego. At this point we cannot afford to allow any envious activity on the part of the ego, in its ongoing desire to collapse our will to live (if it cannot have what it wants).

Troubled by ill health and despair during this early time in our development, we become open to Cosmic solutions, for intuitively we know that this is the only realm in which the answer lies. Meanwhile our friends and others will urge us to try medicines and drugs for the illness and depression, and if our despair has lodged itself in the body as a tumor or other problem, medical intervention may be necessary. However, the ultimate cure will be complete only when we deal with the ego's decision to give up on life. The *I Ching* makes it clear that this step cannot be skipped. "Fate cannot be duped," one line says. If we are to survive, we must undertake the work by which our inner light may be revived. This is not to say that death is unnatural, or avoidable at some time, but it need not, and should not, result from having given up on life by allowing our rebellious ego to have its way. Death more properly comes when we have fulfilled our life's purpose, and in this context death is not a desolate event but a joyful summation of life. When the circumstances of death are correct, the grief of those around us passes into a golden hue of remembrance.

Being confronted by Fate as the inevitable end of going in a wrong direction produces a situation that the *I Ching calls* "shock." Its purpose, at this point, is to make us aware that for much of our life we have played frivolously with life's meaning. Perhaps we have even allowed the ego to test, to see how far it could go against the Cosmic limits. *Treading* (Hex. 10) likens this to "treading on the tail of a tiger." Because the treading is playful, the hexagram explains, the tiger does not bite. The moment we become entrenched in evil, however, the tiger bites. The bite of the tiger—getting caught in its jaws—is the pressure we feel in coming up sharply against our natural limits. While we are still in the state of shock, the ego thinks "how unjust the situation is!" It is necessary to stop resisting in this manner and to allow ourselves to be led out of the problem. Every resistance of the ego that we allow is dangerous, throwing us back upon the rocks of despair and defeat. We are held in the tiger's teeth until we correct ourselves and recognize, without regressing back into the old patterns, that life is a serious, meaningful business.

In coming to terms with Fate, the intellect is of little or no use, for it is ignorant of the affairs of the inner world. *Youthful Folly* (Hex. 4) makes it clear that we cannot know about the inner world in advance, and that we need guidance. *Difficulty at the Beginning* (Hex. 3) says that if we hunt without the guidance of the forester (the Sage) we only lose our way. To obtain help we must ask tor it, sublimating the ego in us, and allowing ourselves to be led.

An example of what happens when we fail to adapt to adverse circumstances is revealed in the case of a woman whose husband had adored her during their early married life. At middle age he began to have affairs with other women. She was unable to accept this blow to her vanity, and within two years contracted three types of cancer and died. Such dangers occur when we *attach ourselves with pride* to anything—a style of life, doing things in a precise way, belonging to a certain family, graduating from a certain school, belonging to a certain social class, or church, or club, or state, or race, or nationality. It is equally dangerous to have strong aversions to things, especially if these aversions have been taken on as part of our proud self-image. Problems in recovery also occur when we accept defeated images of ourselves, such as "being an alcoholic," or "drug addict," or "ex-convict." It is one thing to recognize when we have an allergy to a substance and another to struggle against a defeated self-image. In self-development, all fixed views of ourselves and attachments to images need to be rejected. Through reviving an open-minded receptivity to life, we change negative trajectories and bring the help and blessings of the Cosmos into our lives.

A simple example of negative branding occurred when my collar bone was broken. The doctor told me that because such a break could not have a splint, the bones "would heal in a crooked way," which he demonstrated by crooking his finger. He said "it might always hurt." Indeed, it did continue to hurt long after the bones healed. Then it occurred to me one day to meditate on the matter, to see if I could soothe the bone tissues. When I had come to inner quiet, the image of the doctor crooking his finger and telling me it would always hurt returned, along with the words, "see the bone as straight and whole, as it was originally." This was exactly the message I needed, for the bone never again hurt. I know of still other instances where people with lingering pain were healed by changing a negative image residing in their minds. I am convinced, therefore, that resident negative ideas about ourselves create negative energy fields that play themselves out in our lives. They alter, for the worse, the molecules around us. Healing and correcting problems in our lives does not so much depend on creating new positive images, but of ferreting out and freeing ourselves from negative ones. Once we see them and say a decisive no to them, we become free of their influence.

Nourishment (Hex. 27) refers to the ideas we entertain, or consider. The *I Ching* regards all ideas and images, good or bad, as having an effect on us inwardly and thus are good or bad nourishment for our natures. This hexagram makes us aware that we need to be careful of the ideas and images we take in as nourishment, for they will surely have an effect, for good or for evil. This and other hexagrams warn us that by merely dallying with untrue, half-true, or negative ideas, we will suffer evil consequences. This is because the act of entertaining an idea lends it credibility. Obviously, when an idea is patently false, as when someone says "the moon is made of green cheese," we reject it immediately. This rejection casts it out of the mind. When, however, we remain undecided about an idea, it sinks into our unconscious as credible, whether it is true or not; this is the danger of being indecisive about half-truths when they are first suggested to us, and it is why we are warned in *The Joyous* (Hex. 58) against being "sincere toward disintegrating influences." By greeting them with an attitude of sincerity, an untrue or half-true idea can pull us off balance. For the same reason, *Influence* (Hex. 31) counsels us against listening to any ideas that collapse our perseverance; other hexagrams alert us to the destructive effects of ideas that at first glance seem harmless. As *Coming to Meet* (Hex. 44) says, we tend to underrate the danger of the harmful element that approaches: "It looks so small and weak" that we imagine we "may dally with it and come to no harm." Among the harmful elements that approach are desires, such as wanting things to happen before their time, and doubts that present our situation negatively, or as hopeless.

The nourishing effect of ideas and images is easily observed in children who are left to watch television

unattended. A plethora of ideas and images, both true and false, is put before them, as if on a plate; often this is accompanied by a plate of food, as well, giving the child the implied idea that its parents regard all that they see as good and acceptable food. This encourages the child to override his sense of inner truth about what is good and bad, and to dismiss his natural distaste for the negative things he sees. He is thus trained, from the onset, to give ever greater credibility and tolerance to false, half-false, and degrading ideas. No wonder, then, that our society has a large number of teenage murderers. Society itself has given them the license, through its implicit approval of what goes on the public airways. The cruelty comes later, when society vindictively blames the child for his insensitivity to life.

Doubt and fear, as the primary source of all negative, false, and half-false ideas, are what the *I Ching* calls "the Dark Force." The *I Ching* makes it clear, as mentioned earlier, that the Dark Power is not a quiescent, but a fully active force. *The Abysmal* (Hex. 29) says, "By growing used to what is dangerous, a man can easily allow it to become part of him. He is familiar with it and grows used to evil. With this he has lost the right way, and misfortune is the natural result." In the work of self-development we learn to say a decisive inner no to all half-truths and ideas whose consequences we do not yet understand; especially we say no to those fantasies and ideas that would tempt us to dismiss the warnings of our inner truth. Rejecting questionable ideas is the most important decision-making process we may follow in our lives.

Keeping Still, or *I Ching* Meditation

Coping with frustrations that come from the bad nourishment offered by the ego is one of the subjects of *Keeping Still* (Hex. 52). Only by silencing the voices of our inferiors can we remain free from stepping into the vortex of the Dark Power. Precisely when we are attacked by feelings of restlessness or hopelessness, we receive this hexagram. By following its counsel, and the counsel of others like it such as *The Clinging* (Hex. 30), we are able to gain detachment from our emotions and attain clarity of mind.

While the first purpose of keeping still is to find inner peace by silencing the clamoring and undisciplined voices of our inferiors and ego, keeping still also refers to a method of meditation unique to the *I Ching* [1]. Keeping still involves bringing the movement of the spinal nerves to a standstill. Once we have done this, the hexagram states, 'the ego, with its restlessness, disappears." The fourth line of *The Receptive* (Hex. 2) notes that the dark element closes when at rest and opens when we are active. During activity, conscious thought occurs at lightning speed. However, when we cultivate inner quiet, it is as if the fast, movie-like action of our mind slows until we are able to see the individual frames—the source images of our thoughts. These images are stored in our computer like memory banks. They may be true perceptions of life, untrue fantasies, or decadent traditional ideas. The truer and more relative these images are, the truer our responses to life become, and the more harmonious we feel. Through meditation we become open and unstructured, and it is as if we are guided by the unseen Sage to see what we need to see, to correct our internal programming. We are often guided to see the primary images of the ideas stored in our memory banks, and it is made clear to us what is inadequate or untrue. Once we see with inner clarity what is true and false, we are able to re-decide the issues, thus freeing ourselves from their dominance and their bad effects. Being freed of them, our intuitive awareness is restored and we return to harmony with our inner truth.

It is important to state, without qualification, that we need the guidance of the Sage to do this work. Confucius said,—"To study without meditation is labor wasted; to meditate without study is perilous."

One may consult the *I Ching* in the evening, for example, allow the hexagrams and their images to digest overnight, and then meditate just after awakening. The first line of *The Clinging* (Hex. 30) recommends this practice, saying, “It is precisely at the beginning that serious concentration is important, because the beginning holds the seed of all that is to follow.”

While in preparing to keep still there are no rules, several steps are helpful. It is important to begin by mentally asking the Sage for help to see and understand what we need to know. Then it is good to do a few gentle physical exercises, such as stretching the limbs. One may then sit on a chair, or on the floor in a native American position. The latter is helpful only because it prevents one from going to sleep. It is important to sit comfortably, so that the body does not suffer and call attention to itself. After closing the eyes, one takes a few slow, deep breaths (five or six). These ease physical tensions that would otherwise have to be overcome by mental effort. Looking straight ahead, one then forgets, as much as possible, one’s physical body, and begins the first work of meditating—to clean out and empty the space where our inner thoughts take place. We may visualize an inner room in which we sit, waiting to hear our inner thoughts, or a compartment in the top of the head. It is good to vacuum out the thoughts and objects in the area. This activity of inner cleansing is the most important thing to do, for so long as our inner space is full of thoughts (clutter) managed and controlled by the ego, there is no room to receive emanations (images and thoughts) from the deeper layers of our consciousness, or from the Sage, whose help may be accessed only through achieving an open receptivity. By emptying our inner space, we make it a receptacle into which the Sage may come.

In *Keeping Still* it is said, “The heart thinks constantly,” and that it is necessary to bring the impulses of the heart to quiet. The heart is described as wanting things. In this wanting, it casts about constantly. When wanting cannot lead to having, the heart becomes “sore.” It is useful to note that when the heart thinks, the breath becomes short and fast. Taking five or six slow, deep breaths quiets the heart and stills the agitation caused by incessant wanting. Paying attention to the breathing also helps at first, because it transfers our attention from the external to the internal world.

In regard to inner cleansing, even if we do nothing more in meditating than to cleanse our mind of all thought, we gain the balance that, in *The Taming Power of the Great* (Hex. 26) is referred to as “daily self-renewal.” “Only through such daily self-renewal can a man continue at the height of his powers.” Inner cleansing is also mentioned in the first line of *The Ting* (Hex. 50): “A *ting* with legs upturned. Furthers removal of stagnating stuff.” The “ting” symbolizes our inner container, or inner space; what we allow in this container is also nourishment for the Cosmos; therefore we need to keep in it only that which is good and true. In doing our cleansing work, it is helpful to review the way we feel about other people, to see if we are holding onto any resentments or injuries, or if we feel resistant to our life as it is. If we discover such negative elements, we may free ourselves of them by putting them in an imagined Cosmic Dumpster. This relinquishing of them creates inner peace and harmony; moreover, in yielding up inferior thoughts and ego emotions, such as hatred, vindictiveness, and vengeance, we engage the help and blessings of the Sage. It needs to be said, in regard to injuries done to us by other people, that relinquishing our emotional reactions to these injuries frees us from any continued hold they have on us. This does not mean we excuse or forgive the injustice. We remove the negative energy it has caused our inferiors to feel. Evil deeds create a Fate that returns the evil to the doer, in the manner of a boomerang. However, if we take it upon ourselves to interfere, to make sure justice is done, we prevent the Fate from returning to the doer. At that point, we become embroiled in the doer’s Fate, whereas, when we turn the matter over to the Cosmos, the Cosmos corrects the matter.

Since everything in our minds exists in image form, the use of images, such as the Cosmic Dumpster, is highly effective. In my first meditations I imagined sacrificing negative feelings on an inner altar, until one day I received the Cosmic gift of a Cosmic Dumpster.

It was large enough to contain quantities of negative thoughts. Immediately, upon putting these thoughts in the dumpster, they were taken away by the Cosmos, leaving the dumpster bright and shining again. Our natures are truly made free by our deciding to relinquish such material. Although we do this only in image form, the stored inner image is eliminated, along with its negative pressures and side-effects. It is also true that negative elements may exist in several parts; the parts that may remain will show themselves again. These parts need to be additionally relinquished, or rejected by saying an inner No as they become conscious. Each time we do this, they shrink in size and power until they finally disappear altogether.

If, after doing the work of inner cleansing we still experience feelings of restlessness and resistance to meditation, it is because the ego in us, or the inferiors, are still influencing us through a ‘residual static’ that prevents us from attaining a true state of inner quiet. It may be that our resolve is only halfhearted, or that the ego has remained in control, through insinuating that nothing can be accomplished in this way. Certainly, the ego is the element that interrupts with reasons to do something else that is “more important." It, together with our undisciplined inferiors, are those that also interrupt with complaints that sitting still is difficult, or boring. This activity on the part of the ego and inferiors may continue for as much as two weeks, but each day that we persevere, remaining dedicated to meditate for at least 20 minutes per day, the sleepy-mindedness of the ego will eventually take over, causing it to relinquish control. The inferiors, likewise, will give up their resistance in the face of a truly determined attitude. If we persevere, we soon become aware of the egos efforts to distract us by thoughts that previously motivated us to doubt, or quit. This event marks the point at which the ego separates from our consciousness. Before this time, the ego has spoken as “I," and seemed to be us; now we hear or see it as a separate personage. This awareness is our true sell looking and listening; our inner eyes and inner ears are tuning into the inner world.

At this point in meditation another phenomenon occurs. Whereas at first it was necessary to use mental images to clean and empty our inner space, images now begin to come of themselves. We merely watch them in a detached way, as if we were at a movie. This process continues if we make no attempt to interject ourselves, or to control it. We may see our self doing something, as if we were watching another person, yet we know it to be our self. In one meditation, for example, I was a spectator in an audience, watching myself doing something on a stage. At another time I saw that after I had sacrificed my identity of myself, I had melted down to a mere ‘nub’ of grease on the floor. Afterward, however, I experienced the amazing phenomenon of being blessed, as I never had before. Not all experiences in meditation are so dramatic. Sometimes we simply hear a wise phrase, or see something that resembles a still-life painting, or photo. In whatever way it happens, it seems to happen in the particular form that we as individuals can understand it, and that suits our particular way of seeing, or understanding.

The conscious use of images during the first part of meditation helps us communicate with the involuntary nervous system. In voice training, for instance, it is impossible to relax the voice by thinking ‘relax, because the voice is an involuntary muscle. We are able to influence these muscles, however, through images. For this reason, voice teachers teach relaxation of the voice muscles by projecting the voice out, as to an imaginary point on the wall. The image of projecting the voice relaxes the vocal cords. Similarly, by visualizing the spinal cord and then shining a strong, imaginary light on it, we may bring the activity of the nerves of the backbone to a standstill. In a meditation I saw the spinal nerve actively conveying messages to and from the brain to the different parts of the body. This appeared as hundreds of tiny lights

traveling along the spinal cord, all at the speed of my thinking. Seeing that I had a flashlight in my hand, I played it up and down along the spinal cord (which was in front of me); gradually, the tiny lights slowed down and came to a stop. The resulting peace of mind lasted for days.

Once we bring the activity of the nervous system to a standstill, the ego is no longer able to intrude in our inner space; then, we come to inner quiet. It is important to accept the empty space for what it is—purely and simply as an empty space, with nothing in it. This may seem to he superfluous advice, but since we are accustomed to having our minds full of noises and ideas, our inferiors are uncomfortable at first, because nothing is happening. We need, therefore, to be content to remain quiet in the emptiness. This contentment is the modesty needed to help us gain entrance to the inner world.

After I had begun meditating, as my hexagrams counseled me to do, and had already had a number of meditation experiences, I had one that was directly relevant to the attitude we need to have on approaching meditation. As I began to meditate, I was aware of how much I was looking forward to having an interesting meditation experience. After I had done my exercises in self-cleansing, I soon came to the empty place. Just then, an image emerged in which I saw myself in a rather barren room with only hard, uncomfortable chairs. A sign on the wall indicated that I was in a doctors waiting room; it was somehow clear that the doctor was the Sage. After sitting and waiting for what seemed a long time, it registered in my consciousness that maybe this meditation was not about seeing the doctor, but about waiting itself—that is, about waiting patiently, with acceptance of whether something happened or not. Immediately, upon adapting my attitude to accept waiting, the doctor came in, cheerfully greeted me, and the meditation ended. I understood that when I adopted this attitude of patient acceptance, the experience that I so much wanted would happen. Patient acceptance, I was to learn, was the attitude that would engage the Sage's help for all my life's situations. It has seemed to me to be the 'optimum attitude'.

What we do not recognize, on first beginning to meditate, is that our inner eyes need to be opened. My first experience of inner seeing occurred one morning after awakening. I had not yet arisen or attempted to meditate. Although my eyes were closed, an intense light began to enter my field of vision. When this began, I was alarmed and resistant, wondering what the light could be, for I sensed that the light was a strong presence, or being, and that it sought entrance into me. Then a voice said, '‘Allow this to happen, there is no harm.” It was such an authoritative, calming voice that I relinquished all my resistance. Then the light poured in, filling my vision and my body as well, as if my body were only an empty shell. Immediately this produced a wonderful feeling of peace and harmony that lasted for days. I did not, at the time, fully understand the significance of it, but after that I began regularly to have experiences in meditation.

The explanation came a year later, when my husband began to meditate. One day we meditated at the same time after awakening. He had adopted the practice, but had never had a meditation experience. Although I had told him about various meditation experiences, I had never told him about my experience of seeing that light. In my meditation that morning I saw a group of doctors operating on a man who was laid out on a table in a field. The operation had just ended and they were taking off the bandages that had covered his eyes. I soon recognized that the man was my husband. As he opened his eyes he just sat there and blinked, for he could see only light. The purpose of the operation was obvious, to enable him to see with inner vision, and to see in meditation. When my meditation ended, I got up and made breakfast. A few minutes later, my husband joined me and began describing the amazing thing that had just happened to him: an intense light had entered his eyes and gone into his body. Afterwards, he felt the same wonderful sense of peace that I had experienced a year earlier. From that time on, he too began to have experiences in

meditation. This made me realize that to see in the inner world, it is first necessary to have ones inner eyes opened. That happens, in my view, when as dedicated students of the Sage, we ask to see with clarity.

For a long time our work in meditation is to find hidden evils, and to do battle with our fears and doubts by resolutely standing up to them. Such contests generally take place in a dark realm. However, one day we get past this dark realm into a sphere of light and beauty that I can only call “the other side of the inner life experience.” Just as there is a dark side of the earth and a light side, depending on which side the sun shines, there also appears to be another dimension of life that is light and beautiful.

As mentioned earlier, the primary work of meditating is inner cleansing. It is what in *The Taming Power of the Great* (Hex. 26) is called daily self-renewal. It has the same function as cleaning our houses, or ordering our work benches, or our desks. It is a necessary preparation for doing any' kind of creative work. We need to daily cleanse our inner space, because daily activity invariably brings us into contact with the dark force; this contact unsettles and disorders our inner life in the same way that our houses become dirty through living in them. It is necessary to regularly restore inner order. Inner cleansing frees us of everything that blocks our connection with the Sage. Restoring this connection restores our vital energies and gives us a sense of inner freedom and unity with the Cosmos.

In one of my early meditations I found myself in a small, dark, log cabin, that had neither a floor nor windows, only a crude doorway with no door. The dirt floor was littered with trash and cobwebs, indicating that the cabin had been both neglected and abandoned. When my attention was drawn to a broom that leaned against the wall, it came to me to sweep out the cabin; I then recognized that it was my inner space. This meditation taught me that I needed to visit my inner space regularly, and to keep it clean.

Another of my early meditations gave me help to do this cleaning process. It came in response to my asking the Sage, on sitting down to meditate, for a ‘hearing aid’, to better hear the voice of inner truth. What I received instead was a ‘cosmic vacuum cleaner’. It appeared as a large funnel that was shaped like an elephants trunk. It came down and vacuumed out of the top of my skull, that appeared to be opened up, like cellar doors, so that the contents could be vacuumed out. Sucked up and whisked away were all the cassettes in which the tunes that had been playing in my mind were stored; vacuumed out, too, was the movie I had seen the night before, the images of which had until then haunted my mind; other miscellaneous ‘trash’ was also whisked away, and along with it the static of inner restlessness. Afterwards, my mind was totally clear and I was inwardly in a state of peace. From that time on I began meditation by recalling this vacuum cleaner, to repeat the operation of vacuuming out my mind. Years later, when my four-year-old granddaughter was bothered by nightmares, I told her how I vacuumed out my mind when thoughts or dreams bothered me, and then I did it for her. I asked her to imagine a big vacuum cleaner hose, like an elephant’s trunk, that I would use to vacuum out all the thoughts in her mind. I described her head as opened up, and while I made the motions of vacuuming all over the outside of her head, I made the noises of a vacuum cleaner swishing up all the negative thoughts. ‘"There goes that awful thing,” I said, “and there goes another," until I said, “There, they are all gone." Afterwards, she went right back to sleep. Later, when she was 13 and baby-sitting her six-year-old brother, who had been watching a violent cartoon on television, she called me in alarm. “Please, Gramma, teach Will to vacuum out his mind. He says these terrible things keep going through his mind, and he can’t get rid of them; he’s very disturbed!" Apparently she had tried to teach him the technique, but was unsuccessful. I spoke with him for a few minutes about what he had seen, and then did the same exercise with him on the telephone, being sure to make all the noises that went with the image. Immediately, he was released from the grip of those

images and began talking about something else, as if he had never been disturbed. Then I talked with him about the damaging effect of looking at certain images. He understood me, but said, “Couldn’t I look at them just once in awhile?" I told him he could, but that they would still be really bad for him, and that it he continued to look at them, the day may come when it may not be so easy to get free of their bad effects. I told him that everything he took into his mind had an effect, either a good or a destructive one, and he would need to really think about it. The importance of what we take in, the way of ideas, is discussed in *The Corners of the Mouth (Nourishment)* (Hex. 27).

I have been convinced by these and other experiences that variations of these techniques have been used for centuries, without our being aware of the mechanism and benefit behind them. Religious cleansing rituals and sacrifices must have had their origin in this need we have for communicating with our inferiors. Doctors certainly communicate with them when they say to us, “this will hurt only a moment," thus engage their ability to be brave, or patient.

When we do have meditation experiences, the situations we encounter are drawn from our everyday life. While people in former times may have seen angels or mythological beasts, my meditations have included images of my day: submarines and computers, as well as images from the *I Ching* of dragons, wells, and *tings* [2]. Particularly vivid dreams are often the equivalent of meditations, because they contain the same kind of messages as meditation experiences. It is often possible to understand these dreams by meditating afterwards.

Experiences in meditation, like dreams, are easily forgotten, therefore, it is valuable to write them down right away. If we meditate over a period of years and look back over these written experiences, we find that they comprise an entire inner life journey that is as important as our outer world experiences. For example, my simple dark hut evolved, over the years, into a clean Swiss chalet with a wooden floor; later it became a Victorian house with beautiful wood paneling; the house, as a whole, however, was rather dark. My present inner house is one that has much light, with flowers blooming just outside. They were a record of my personal growth

Meditation experiences make us aware of the symbolism of myths and fairytales. As mentioned earlier, Snow White, for me, symbolized my true self organizing and disciplining my inferiors, represented by the dwarfs. The evil queen was my false self, or ego, with its preoccupation with how others saw me. The Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of 0z,* similarly represented the ego, while the wizard represented its unmasked bravado. The Good Witch was my true self, reminding me that I always know how to get home. Alice’s shrinking to enter the keyhole that led to Wonderland symbolized the decrease of ego that was necessary tor me to enter the inner world of meditation. I saw the three-headed dog Cerberus, of Greek myth, as the ego on guard against my entering the inner world, where I would discover its fraudulent nature, and reclaim the leadership of my true self. Recovering the true self is an aspect of the hero’s journey described by many myths.

Through meditating, we are able to bring to the surface of our consciousness the hidden negative images we harbor; through conquering our fears and doubts, we develop understanding and patience with others, for we see that they, as we, are caught in the vortex of their fears. We understand that only by receiving help from the Cosmos are we able to become free; thus, we are able to be open-minded toward others, and to hold to their potential to rescue themselves. By working on ourselves, we begin to give expression to that sublime quality described in the sixth line of *The Well* (Hex. 48), of the “really great man whose inner wealth is inexhaustible; the more that people draw from him, the greater his wealth becomes."

Footnotes

1. See my book on this subject: *The Other Way, Meditation Experiences Based on the I Ching*, Anthony Publishing Company, Stow, 1990.

2. A Ting is a vessel used for offering nourishment (sacrifice) to the ancestors, as described in *The Ting* (Hex. 50)

Action in Human Relationships

Modesty

We find, while we are working on our self-development through a daily interaction with the *I Ching*, that we are gradually realigning our point of view to the *way of the Sage*. Since this point of view is in harmony with our true nature, we gradually become free of inner conflict. By finding the courage to relinquish our habitual means of self-defense, we find ourselves being defended. This change in our life happens simply in odd and inexplicable ways. It happens when we forego our old habit of striving and relying on contrivance and effort. As a consequence, the tensions in our relationships ease. By being firm in our inner responses to events around us, while not giving up on others' potential to correct themselves, we have a beneficial effect on them. In following the counsel of the Sage and asking for help, we engage the helping forces of the Cosmos to act on our behalf, whereby we achieve what would be impossible to achieve all by ourselves. What brings about these changes? Without noticing it, we have begun to return to our natural modesty. By being conscientious in our effort to follow our inner truth, by keeping open-minded and inwardly firm in holding to our values, our modesty comes to expression. This engages Cosmic help. Through these first steps we begin to see that modesty is both our shield and our sword. Because nearly all of our work is inner work which is not outwardly noticeable, it would appear that we do nothing at all, yet we achieve many things.

Modesty comes to expression when we realize that we need help from the Sage, and when we ask for it. The willpower to apply reticence is also a form of modesty, for we restrain our clamoring inferiors. Patience, or holding firm when the pressures of the moment are intense, and when yielding to them in the slightest degree would cause us to lose our path, is also modesty. Patience in searching out and freeing ourselves of incorrect expectations put forward by the ego in us, is also modesty. It is modesty that causes us to reflect, to see if we have overlooked any evil in ourselves; it is modesty that guards against the entrance of doubt, fear, self-pity, indolence, and the carelessness that slides into weakness when we need to maintain firmness and discipline. Modesty is also the unflagging inner attentiveness that guards against the self-flatteries of the ego, and its attempts to stake claims and to assert rights. It is what causes us to resist the false enthusiasm of the ego when it presses to have comprehensive solutions "now!" Modesty is the sheer will power that keeps us from committing ourselves to any path of action while we have not yet attained clarity, or help from the Sage. It is also the will to remain collected and detached at the onset of shocking events. It is what keeps us from rushing to distrust and blame the Sage, or Fate, for the bad things that happen to us, and it is what keeps us open to allow the solution that lies hidden in events to show itself. Modesty is also the humility to disperse bad moods through a fierce resistance to the ego's insinuations of doubt. It is not losing sight of what there is to be grateful for, and it is devotion to the path of the good for its own sake, without thought of reward. Modesty is recognition of the self-importance and self-flattery that lies in the grandiose thought that we know better than others what is good for them, or that our job is to 'save the world'. Modesty is holding to the low road of trying to relate correctly to the people who are in our particular sphere of influence. It is also recognizing that the goal of self-development is not getting to a 'place', as in becoming 'enlightened', or 'perfected', but maintaining a moment-to-moment connection with our inner truth, and keeping free of the ego's incessant efforts to usurp control. Finally, modesty makes us aware that our responsibility is to correctly represent the Sage, our indispensable Teacher and Helper, in our actions, thoughts, and speech, without taking on any pretenses of

speaking on behalf of the Sage, or "truth."

At first we are unable to understand any of these things with clarity. For a time the ego asserts that dropping our defenses will expose us to destruction. Gradually, however, as we stand firm against its pressures, the power that the ego exerts through pressing fears upon us, dwindles. Soon, we feel secure enough to venture forth from behind our barricades, and eventually to dismantle them. However, we are not able to do this before the proper time, or without first securing the help of the Sage. In the meantime we need to learn to work without expectation, for help cannot come if the ego in us is secretly measuring our effort, in order later to say that we "have done our part, now why hasn't this worked out, as the Sage promised ." Hedging, or keeping a residue of distrust and suspicion of the Sage keeps the Sage in retirement. The Sage, being true to the Cosmic Order, cannot respond to the demands of the ego in us. These demands, and the distrust that founds them, are what are called, in *Fellowship with Men* (Hex. 13), line three, "reservations of attitude."

For a long time we waver between making a courageous effort to do the right thing and deriding the stupidity of relying on something we cannot see. In this case the true self is still listening to the ego because it has not yet developed the courage to decisively abandon it as a counselor. Allowing the ego to remain in competition with the Sage as counselor to the true self puts the Sage in an undignified position; therefore the Sage must withdraw, to remain true to its principles. Moreover, although we want help from the Sage, such vacillation in the matter of whom we will follow proves us to be unreliable followers. We continue to receive the help of the Sage when we are sincere and earnest, but we lose its help when we indecisively drift back into listening to the egos complaints and flatteries. At such a juncture we would likely receive the first line in either *The Army* (Hex. 7) or *The Gentle (Penetrating, Wind)* (Hex. 57), both of which counsel us to discipline our vacillating inferiors. Thus, until we are more firm in our approach, our progress is likely to be two steps forward and one backward. Eventually, as we learn to identify the voices of the ego, and to recognize and avert the danger that listening to its voices brings, we become inwardly firm, reliable, and devoted to the Sages influence. Then our progress is steady, and the help we receive is consistent.

Learning the Way of the Sage through Self-Development

Anyone who works with the *I Ching*, whether he uses it for self-development, or for guidance in the most seemingly mundane matters, is being taught the *way of the Sage.* No matter on which ground we approach it, its counsel guides us to realign our attitude with the Cosmic Viewpoint. It does this precisely through helping us to see the importance of the small and the hidden that lies within the seemingly mundane.

Our self-development takes place by encountering problems in three main areas: money, health, and relationships. It is not mere chance that these are the problems that most frequently bring people to consult the *I Ching*.

To attain the help we need to deal with these issues, it is necessary to form a partnership with the Sage. This requires preliminary work called "working on what has been spoiled," which means that we are brought, through the hexagrams, to recognize and correct defective or decadent ideas in regard to these issues. These defective ideas isolate us from the Sage and from the help that we need. In consulting the *I Ching,* its hexagrams and lines reflect the defective ideas and attitudes we need to correct; the counsel given shows us how we may free ourselves of them.

When the *I Ching* speaks of goals, it invariably refers to solving the problem at hand. In the greater context of the *I Ching*, working toward a goal means achieving human unity on an enduring basis. This greater goal, however, is not achieved through working on promoting human unity, but by decreasing the personal attitudes we hold that obstruct human unity. The overall goals, we begin to understand, are achieved by paying attention to our ordinary sphere of responsibility. Our work does not require us, single-handedly, to be Atlas holding up the world.

The model for all relationships is to be found in the way the Sage relates to us as its students. As the Sage comes to our help when we are modest, open, and receptive, and departs when the ego in us leads, we are given the model for how we are meant to relate to others. In seeing that the Sage respects its own integrity, we learn we thus to define and respect our own integrity. As the Sage will not compromise its principles, we learn not to compromise ours. As the Sage is ever patient and never gives up on us, even when we have been unbearable arrogant, we learn to bear with others egos, and not to execute them by giving up on them. As the Sage gives us the freedom to come and go, that is, we have the freedom to be receptive and open with the Sage or not, we give others the same freedom. Thus we learn to appreciate the great patience the Sage extends to us. Nearly all our lessons have this twofold aspect, that while we are learning how to relate to the Sage, we are learning how we are to relate to others. We scarcely notice, in all this activity, that the word success refers to engaging the Sages help to complete what we do, for we do not have the personal power needed to complete our work without this help. Thus we learn not only what our capabilities and responsibilities are, we learn our human limits as well. We learn, therefore, to ask for, and rely on, the help of the Cosmos to bring our work to completion.

We are brought to the *I Ching* perhaps to recognize our intrinsic dependence on the Cosmos; but we are also brought to it to see that when we acquire the modesty that brings Cosmic help, life begin to be a daily set of miracles. When we finally recognize that our life is inextricably connected to and dependent upon the Cosmos, the primary doubt that we internalized during childhood, that what you see is ‘all there is’, disappears.

The following hexagrams define our relationship with the Sage and thereby present the model of how we are meant to relate to others: *Fellowship with Men* (Hex. 13), *Coming to Meet* (Hex. 44), *Gathering Together* (Hex. 45), *The Family* (Hex. 37), *Holding Together,* (Hex. 8), *Following (Hex.* 17), *Influence* (Hex. 31), *The Wanderer* (Hex 57), and *Progress* (Hex. 35).

Coming to Meet [1]

Coming to Meet (Hex. 44) describes a correct relationship as one in which two people come to meet each other halfway. Halfway means that both are equally open and receptive toward each other, and that both do the work of coming halfway to meet the other. Halfway also describes the equality that is essential, if a relationship is to remain enduringly harmonious.

The student of the Sage finds that his first important lessons concern the way he relates to the Sage. His approach needs to be modest and open, sincere and free of selfish, ego-centered motives, if he is to draw the Sage out of its ‘retirement’. These principles also serve as the model for all human relationships, but in particular to the intimate relationship between two people.

Youthful Folly, (Hex. 4) further defines the Sage-student relationship by informing us that we need to have

a childlike openness of mind that is tree of preconceptions and fixed opinions. Receiving this hexagram suggests that we may need to free ourselves from impediments in our attitude that prevent us from coming to meet the Sage halfway. A common impediment occurs when we approach the Sage with doubt and distrust.

The word ‘action’, found throughout the *I Ching*, often refers to taking the action needed to correct our attitude, in order that a true coming to meet is possible. For example, taking action may refer to giving up defenses and fixed positions, or to yielding on points of pride, or to retreating from feelings of anger, or disappointment, or to disciplining inferiors that cause resistance and restlessness, or to resisting impulsive actions that seek to force results. But it also means saying an inner No to the ego in ourselves and others.

In *Coming to Meet*, the commentary specifies that “the coming together must be free of dishonest ulterior motives, otherwise harm will result.” This may refer either to the way we relate to the Sage, or to another person, or to the way another person relates to us. As the Sage will not respond to our ulterior purposes and intentions, we are not meant to respond to others’ ulterior motives and hidden intentions. These will show themselves, if we are attentive. Others, likewise, should not respond to them in us.

Such counsel helps us to discipline our inferiors, with their ceaseless clamoring for attention, and to rebuff the ego and its claims, connivances, and flatteries. Through silencing the inferiors, we create the empty space that enables us to hear the Sage from within. In creating this space within ourselves, we come to meet the Sage halfway, enabling the Sage to enter. In regard to this space, we need to ask whether we harbor arrogant secret reservations of attitude, such as “You need to prove yourself to me?” We might also give thought, in this regard, to the quality of space we grant within our hearts to those we love. Is it spacious and generous, or cramped and full of arbitrary conditions? Just as making an effort to disperse distrust, doubt, fear, and arrogance within ourselves not only brings a response from the Sage, being generous of heart toward those we love brings a positive response from them.

Coming to meet halfway, on the other hand, does not mean that we go to meet another who is not coming halfway to meet us. *Before Completion* (Hex. 64), line six, refers to going more than halfway, or going forward while the other holds back, as “drunken exuberance.” While we are not meant to love conditionally, neither are we meant to love drunkenly. We are not meant to shower people with our feelings of affection while their egos dominate, and their true selves are held in reserve. Nor are we to give of ourselves when others are being insensitive to us, for to do so is to cultivate their egos. The fifth line in *Possession in Great Measure* (Hex. 14) advises us not to lose the bounds of dignity. Then, the line says, people are won “not by coercion, but by unaffected sincerity, so that they are attached to us in sincerity and truth.” When generosity and benevolence are given to the ego, “insolence might begin to spread. Insolence must be kept in bounds by dignity; then good fortune is assured.”

The *I Ching* speaks of the necessity to attain innocence of mind. This means that if we are to act with instinctive correctness, we need to firmly reject the contrivances and intentions of the ego. Intention is indicated when we receive the second line of *Innocence* (Hex. 25), which counsels us not to “count the harvest while plowing.” The ego focuses obsessively on the goal, and engages in contriving and striving. If we focus instead on keeping our attitude free of intention, then the rest takes care of itself . It is characteristic of the *I Ching* way that if we want happiness, we do not focus on attaining happiness. Instead, we focus on being true to ourselves, because true happiness is the natural consequence of being true to ourselves. Similarly, if we want health, we focus on attaining an inner harmony with our bodies.

This is achieved by realizing that we are our bodies, and by appreciating the gift of life that our bodies represent. It is to reject looking down on the body as an “instrument of the mind,” or “vehicle” to express any the glorified self-images concocted by the ego. Appreciating the body happens when we reflect on the great abilities of the body consciousness to interface with the environment quite independently of the mind; it also comes from realizing that the body knows best what it needs to be healthy. Allowing the mind to micromanage the body can lead to ill health. Coming to meet, in our relationship to the body, means focusing on the essentials, for when the essentials are correct, the consequences are correct.

When two people come to meet in the love relationship, it must be mutually voluntary and based on the principle of spontaneous attraction described in *The Marrying Maiden* (Hex. 54). Spontaneous attraction, this hexagram says, is the “essential principle of relatedness.” Until the coming to meet is mutual, and free of any superimposed fear, doubt, or egotism, it is necessary to maintain reserve in our relationship, even if that person is the one truly meant for us. Until the coming to meet is truly mutual we must wait, for unity is possible only when people are mutually honest and sincere in their way of life, and when each is centered within himself and firm in his principles; then neither person oversteps the limits of sensitivity, justice, and equality. It is the great joy of such relationships that they are full of mutual trust and sensitivity.

We understand coming to meet better if we compare it to a contract made between two people. If one does not fulfill his part of the agreement, because of secret intentions to only do so much, the contract is likely to fail. Although such a person may have entered the contract without any immediate objections, his attitude may nevertheless contain such hidden reservations; these surface when his part of the bargain is to be performed. A person with hidden reservations of attitude may secretly feel that contracts are not to be taken seriously; or, on seeing how difficult it is to fulfill his part, he may renege. It is impossible to come to meet such a person halfway; the *I Ching* repeatedly advises that it is better for us to go on our way alone, and to wait until the fundamentals of unity are firmly established before we commit ourselves.

For a long time during our sell-development we hedge on following our inner truth, because we have been taught to distrust it. Therefore, we agree only to follow conditionally; if the going looks difficult, our inferiors complain that they did not agree to follow under these conditions’. A firm resolve needs to be made to defeat these protests of the ego.

If we are already involved in a defective relationship, that relationship becomes the means by which we learn the way of the Sage, and the principles of coming to meet. Whether we are meant to correct or heal that relationship, or end it in the least destructive way, we can only know with the help of the Sage. If it is meant to end, we can ask for the Sage to guide us through the separation process, and to help close any remaining inner connections, for it is essential to close these connections if we are to be free to enter any new relationships later on. Meanwhile, relating correctly to this situation with the help of the Sage prepares us for a deeper and more meaningful relationship in the future. In these lessons we are taught to reclaim who we really are, and to respect both our boundaries and those of the other. Until we have really claimed, honored, and come to respect ourselves, we are incapable of loving another. If, on the other hand, the relationship is meant to endure, neither person will be able, in their hearts, to close the inner connection. If we are willing to follow the Sages guidance, we will be guided correctly through these experiences in a way that harms neither person.

Inner Withdrawal as Punishment

Inner withdrawal is an essential part of the business of relating and coming to meet halfway. Withdrawal has already been minimally described, but because it is not common to our Western experience, it needs to be better understood.

Withdrawal is two things: First, it is a modest response to times when others, who for perfectly legitimate reasons, need space, and when they withdraw from us to get it. Here, withdrawal is to observe and be sensitive to the needs of the situation; we retreat from any impulse of the ego to want to feel offended, and we withdraw without closing our hearts or minds. Second, withdrawal is a corrective response to times when others' egos are active. In this sense withdrawal is regarded by the *I Ching* as punishment. The sixth line of *Youthful Folly* (Hex. 4) says, "In punishing folly, it does not further one to commit transgressions. The only thing that furthers is to prevent transgressions."The commentary adds, "Sometimes an incorrigible fool must be punished. He who will not heed will be made to feel. This punishment is quite different from a preliminary shaking up. But the penalty should not be imposed in anger; it must be restricted to an objective guarding against unjustified excesses. Punishment is never an end in itself but serves merely to restore order."

The Family (Hex. 37) makes clear those actions that disrupt order in human affairs, and that are outside the correct limits for relating: the acting out of the ego as temper, and its seeking to attain things by force; this may occur as wheedling, flattery, or aggression. In children, ego shows itself in temper tantrums, and by their stubbornly and loudly inserting themselves into the spaces of others, to make them react. In the adult, ego occurs as encroachment into others' spaces, or as aggression, whether the aggression be passive, through connivance, or outright, through intimidation. It occurs as passive aggression when we (or another) arbitrarily close our hearts and minds to another, or when we make negative remarks or jokes, or when we behave insensitively, as by carelessly taking another's kindness and help for granted.

Withdrawal as a way to correctly punish such transgressions in others has three steps: we acknowledge that the situation is incorrect and say an inner no to it; we mentally withdraw from the other by becoming neutral, while turning the transgression over to the Cosmos for correction. We make sure that we have not closed our mind and heart (have lost our humility), for when we do this, all that has been achieved through withdrawal will be nullified.

The effect of withdrawal is to temporarily interrupt our warm inner connection with the other. When we have a normal open and good-hearted feeling toward another, we are connected with that person on an inner level, and our good feelings toward them constitute an inner flow of nourishment that we both receive. In withdrawing into emotional neutrality and ceasing eye-to-eye contact, the flow of inner nourishment ceases. This causes the other to feel inexplicably isolated and lonely. This is precisely how the Sage retreats from us when we are not truly open and receptive. The sudden loss of nourishment and feeling of being isolated awakens the others true self to the realization that he has made a mistake by allowing the ego free rein.

To be effective, withdrawal must originate in humility. It must be done in the same spirit in which a parent disciplines a child; it does it for the child's own good. The withdrawal cannot contain any ego element, such as temper, feelings of revenge, or attempt to get the other to notice what we are doing. We cannot allow the ego in us to rejoice in punishing, or to try to exercise control. The punishment is done only because it is the correct response to the other's ego-dominated behavior. The message we send by doing this is that their true self is wrong in listening to the ego. While momentary anger may initiate withdrawal, anger must not be allowed to become a power in itself, which happens when the ego appropriates anger

and indulges in it. Allowing the ego to indulge in anger, or revenge, is regarded in *The Power of the Great* (Hex. 34)) as an abuse of power that produces a Fate. The sixth line in *Progress* (flex. 35) calls it "making progress with the horns."This is permissible, it says, "only for the purpose of punishing ones own city," meaning the ego in oneself. Correct withdrawal thus has strict limits. If it is to be in harmony with the way of the Sage, we may never withdraw arbitrarily, simply to get another to do what we want them to do; nor may we punish them because they have views and opinions that are different from ours. We may also remain withdrawn only so long as the Sage indicates it is necessary; usually, this is when withdrawal has had its effect. Persisted in beyond this point, it is both unjust and damaging.

After saying no, withdrawing, and turning the matter over to the Cosmos, it is necessary to go on our way. This gives the other person space to reflect on the problem, and for our withdrawal to have its effect. We do not watch the situation. We allow the other person to return to correctness on their own time table. Sometimes this requires months, or even longer. This relinquishing, on our part, has great and good consequences, for when we have truly detached and turned the matter over to the Cosmos, Fate completes its circular course, correcting the situation in the best possible manner.

When the other person has recognized his error and begun to return to openness and receptivity, it is our duty to meet him halfway. This means that we become open to him again, not in an expansive way, but tentatively, because at first the opening he allows may be only tiny and conditional. We meet him move for move, halfway. We do not forget that only a moment ago the situation was incorrect. In this way, we allow the seriousness of the situation to become mentally digested by the other, and we remain ready to immediately withdraw again, should his ego re-emerge in the slightest.

Since a person's ego loses power only when its acts lead to an obvious dead-end, or humiliation, any sympathy on our part that would cause him to minimize the seriousness of the situation (called "dallying and laughing" in *The Family* (Hex. 37)), lets him oft the hook of his mistake. Then he fails to learn the important lesson he is meant to learn. When we make this mistake, we are likely to receive *Grace* (Hex. 22), that says, "One is under the spell of grace and the mellow mood induced by wine. This grace can adorn, but it can also swamp us. Hence the warning not to sink into convivial indolence but to remain constant in perseverance. Good fortune depends on this." It is important to recognize that when another person's development is not firmly established, the situation may revert several times before his progress becomes established. It is important, therefore, to remain disciplined in our attitude and let him reap the harvest of his mistakes. When we abandon this discipline, we abandon our post ot duty. This causes the Sage, who has been helping us, to once more retire until we correct ourselves. In such instances we are likely to receive *The Ting* (Hex. 50), line four, that reflects this mistake on our part: "The legs of the *ting* are broken. The princes meal is spilled and his person soiled. Misfortune."

It must be said at this point that the *I Ching* has many hexagram lines and references that point out the influence that the true self has on others. It is important, one line says, that this influence always be good. The word influence seems always to be limited to the effect we have on others. This effect, communicated to them as feelings, seems to be in the form of vibrations rather than being an outward, willed, and conscious effect we have upon them, or an influence that occurs through, words or ideas. We affect them in such a way that we either engage or discourage their egos. Thus, engaging with the other when they are open and receptive encourages their true self, while withdrawing when their ego is in control, discourages their ego. The interaction is similar to the positive and negative reinforcement techniques used in animal training.

“Times of influence” is a phrase one meets frequently in the *I Ching*. This refers to times when people are open, receptive, and harmonious with each other, and when there is a free-flowing, spontaneous interchange that is free of distrust or intention. This harmony and peace itself provides the good influence, for the vibrations and feelings are loving, kind, and heart to heart. This phrase seems never to mean having an influence ‘over’ someone, but rather ‘with’ them. In *Abundance* (Hex. 55), the first line says that there will be a short period of influence in which ones “going meets with recognition.” This indicates that there will be a time of open receptivity and trust. The succeeding lines of this hexagram present an eclipse that occurs, blocking this open communication. The commentaries to these hexagram lines point to slanders and intrigues (wrong ideas and perceptions) that obstruct the good feelings they would otherwise have toward each other. The remedy indicated in line two of *Abundance* (Hex. 55) is to “hold to the power of truth,” for this allows the darkening to pass by. The purpose of inner withdrawal, as these lines indicate, is to re-establish the conditions of openness and receptivity that are the foundation of harmony.

Disengagement within Oneself

When we disengage from negative images in our minds, we arouse the helping forces of the Cosmos to solve problems in a just and correct manner. These images are often connected with feelings of alienation and hostility, doubts about our path and its outcome, or anxieties. These images cause us to try to influence the situation outwardly, as by ambitiously seeking swift progress, or by attempting to take matters in hand to bring about a comprehensive solution. The fifth line of *Conflict* (Hex. 6) says that we may safely turn the matter over to the Sage. In many situations the problem is resolved through disengagement, in which we let go and simply let happen what will happen. This is what is meant in *The Judgment* in *Biting Through* (Hex. 21), which says, “it is favorable to let justice be administered.” We turn it over to the Cosmos to administer.

Through practicing disengagement from negative images and their offspring emotions, we train ourselves not to brand adverse situations as a negative fate. Instead, we keep open to what we are meant to learn from the situations, and to how we might be used by the Cosmos to promote the good. This openness allows the Sage to resolve the difficulties constructively. From the *I Ching* point of view, adversity provides the opportunity for the inner growth and development by which we overcome the doubts, anxieties, and judgments that block our access to the Cosmos. Sometimes these adversities lead us to free ourselves from psychological burdens we have been carrying all our lives. After we have worked with the *I Ching* for some time, and become thoroughly familiar with the patterns and voices of the ego, our reactions to adversities help others correct their point of view. As the Sage has mirrored to us the significance of our thoughts and actions, we are able to mirror to others the nature ol their ego and their true self.

Limitation

We see from the foregoing that the types of actions counseled by the *I Ching* tend to be expressed in terms of subtracting rather than adding: We subtract incorrect thoughts by being taught in *Keeping Still* (Hex. 52) to free ourselves from their negative effects. Through *Limitation* (Hex. 60), we learn correctly to define our limits by disallowing ego-based thoughts and actions, and by withdrawing from the ego in others. Before becoming involved in trying situations we rehearse our limits by reminding ourselves that the ego

in us will be standing on the side, ready and eager to become involved. By remaining aware of it, it is no longer able to insert itself. *Limitation* also informs us that if we would set limits on the behavior of others, we must first limit ourselves. This means that if we would cure another's hostility toward us, we must first free ourselves of any alienation we have toward him, for alienation is a form of recognition of his ego that keeps it energized. Such alienation may exist in the form of a closed mind, or a fixed view that he is hopeless and impossible to influence. Another necessary limitation is to restrain ourselves, through self-discipline, from watching the other to see if our withdrawal is working; such watching on our part is yet another activity of the ego in us that energizes his.

The *I Ching* explains that we must learn to work with time, for time is the vehicle of the Cosmos. This means that we need to build within ourselves an attitude of acceptance about the amount of time that is required, since we cannot know how much time is needed. For example, we need to allow time for the other to receive our inner messages, and time for the Cosmic forces to help. Such an attitude is compared to the principle of working with "water that only runs downhill." Sometimes the pressure put on us by our undisciplined inferiors "to act," requires us to place upon our interiors what the *I Ching* calls "galling limits." This means that during such times we can overcome the assaults of the ego and the inferiors only by mounting a determined resoluteness to withstand them. What we do not know is how very cowardly the ego is, and how little the inferiors and the ego can withstand a determined resoluteness. It is my experience that they can withstand a true resoluteness for only three minutes. Their power lies only in making us think we are powerless against them, as when they say, "That's the way I am, I can't do anything about it." Only if we believe this (by allowing doubt of ourselves) can they win, for when we cling steadfastly to our path, as to a life preserver, we receive help from the Sage. We receive it even more readily if we remember humbly to ask for help.

The Power of Inner Truth

Working on our inner nature in the ways described above develops the power of inner truth. Being firm in our minds as to what is essential and correct is also a part of the power of inner truth. *Revolution* (Hex. 49) stresses that what we ask of people must "correspond with a higher truth and not spring from arbitrary or petty motives." Receiving this line is meant to make us reflect on what we ask of people. What we think of as being consistent with the demands of justice may not be true from the Cosmic Viewpoint. Nor is it essential that people fit within our pre-structured ideas of how they ought to be. What is essential is made clear in working with the *I Ching*. We may have imagined, for example, that a person who has been unfair ought to go through a series of steps to re-establish his credibility and good will. While this may be true in the overall sense, it is not correct that he does it as a response to demands made by the ego in us. We may correctly ask others to conform to what is just and true only in the most universal sense. We may not ask them to assuage our pride or meet unreasonable and arbitrary conditions The way in which a person returns to the path is not properly our business; furthermore, when they have returned, we need to meet them halfway. We need to reject attempts by the ego in ourselves to use these moments to be seen as the one 'in the right'. In all situations, success is won through attaining the help of the Sage; this partnership, in turn, is based on our coming to meet the Sage with an innocent mind. If, after we have attained success, we then allow the ego to appropriate the success to its ends, forgetting our partnership with the Sage, breakthrough and breakdown occurs, as the hexagram *Breakthrough/Resoluteness* (Hex. 43) makes clear.

While we prevent the ego, once we understand our limits, from telling other people what to do, we are

also firm in saying what we are willing, or are not willing to do. That is to respect our true self and its intrinsic space. Inner truth has strength only when we respond from firmly placed values as to what is just and correct, and when what we do is in accord with our dignity. As it says in *Conflict* (Hex. 6), if we take everything "into consideration at the very beginning" by defining the limits that are appropriate for us, and by acknowledging what is correct and just in relating to others, "the cause of conflict is removed in advance." Being firm in following our path means realizing what is correct and being unwilling to depart from it. People intuit whether or not we are firmly centered within ourselves (know who we are), and whether or not we are in command of our intrinsic space. Knowing who we are is to be in touch with our deep inner sense of what feels right, and being unwilling to betray our true self, as when we are easily persuaded away from our inner feelings. When we are weak within, people will constantly draw us off our center balance, encroach into our intrinsic space, and put us in difficult and unsuitable situations. Being firm means that we are not willing to betray our inner guidelines (limits).

Having inner limits means that we have drawn a fence around what is correct for us; for instance, we retreat the instant we feel the ego in us becoming engaged with another's; we retreat from any desire that would cause us to act impulsively and throw ourselves away; we go only halfway to meet another, but we remain open minded and open hearted. We 'occupy our inner space' by not giving others inner permission to encroach into it. All of this is to say yes to who we really are. It is to affirm our intrinsic space and make it inviolate. What other people know about us is where, inside ourselves, we are weak or firm, where we are open and closed, and where we are certain and uncertain. In those areas in which we are firm, people simply do not challenge us, or trespass. If we find people trespassing in ways that make us feel uncomfortable, we need to look inside to see how we may have been giving them permission, by not being firm about something. Firmness, it needs to be said, is not the same thing as rigidity. Rigidity emanates from fear; it is a bravado that is actually quite vulnerable to being broken down by others. Firmness comes from making an inner inspection to see what feels true and not true, and from being firmly resolved to allow only that which feels true. Once we are firm in this way, it is easy to say the kind of no we would say to someone who tells us that the moon is made of green cheese. There is no question or inner argument about it. Somehow, in modern training, we are taught to be indecisive and undiscerning, as if discernment is the equivalent of being blindly judgmental and narrow-minded. We are told to be open-minded in a rigid sort of way. Holding a rigidly open mind that has no basis in inner truth gets us into trouble, because we lose ourselves. This open-mindedness in women, for instance, is then targeted by the advertising media, that encourages them to sell themselves as sexually inviting. The danger of such ideas in terms of self-esteem is obvious. Women and men equally need to reject unequivocally that which would lead them to compromise their inner dignity and self-worth.

At first we do not realize the power that accompanies the firm inner sense of values that the *I Ching* calls inner truth, especially when this firmness cannot be shaken. The first line of *Gathering Together* (Hex. 45) notes that the power of inner truth is directly diminished by doubt: "If you are sincere, but not to the end, there will sometimes be confusion, sometimes gathering together." Where we waver, the other wavers. The commentary to the third line of *Duration* (Hex. 32) says, "Distressing experiences...are not merely effects produced by the external world, but logical consequences evoked by [ones] own nature." What we fear tends to engage the thing we fear. If, for example, we feel guilt or doubt about our actions in the past, others affected intuitively feel our doubt and bring the matter up. If, however, we let go of our past mistakes, others let go of them, too. There is a saying in Taoism that "fear is the place where harm enters."

It we have vacillated for years and suddenly cease doing it, we may not expect people to change their

habitual view of us all at once. They will still expect us to vacillate. We should not be surprised, then, if they test to see if we have indeed changed, and if our firmness is real. Only by persevering in inner firmness does our new attitude penetrate to them as real.

Sometimes the power of inner truth (see *Inner Truth* (Flex. 61)) must mount to great strength before it can break through obdurate situations. It mounts in strength in direct proportion to our inner perseverance and willpower to hold to the correct path. The influence on others is acquired through the principle of *gentle penetration* described in *The Gentle (The Penetrating, Wind)* (Hex. 57). Just as roots penetrate rocks and break them apart, perseverance in the correct attitude breaks through closed minds. Penetration is like the proverbial light bulb that goes on in people's minds. After a time of penetration, understanding suddenly takes place. This is also the way the Sage awakens our understanding through our everyday lessons with the *I Ching*.

Being firmly centered in our inner truth gives rise to spontaneously expressed external actions. In these instances we find ourselves saying words or carrying out actions without having any intent whatever to act, or to say anything. To our astonishment, what we say or do exactly fits the needs of the situation. When this happens, we seem to be channels or vehicles for the action rather than its initiators. We experience the moment while at the same time being detached from it. Indeed, just prior to such a happening, we may have been making a great effort to remain detached. On being astonished at the strength with which we have said or done the thing, we think, "I should not have said that," or "I should not have done that." In asking the *I Ching* afterward, however, it is confirmed that what we have done was correct. This sort of action can occur only when we are inwardly receptive and open to help from the Cosmos. Indeed, this attitude has aroused the Cosmos to act through us.

Inner correctness and balance also activate what the *I Ching* calls 'helping friends." These are Cosmic in origin, but also include helping aspects of ourselves and others. Once invoked, they provide the necessary inner assent that is needed to achieve success. We invoke them by what the *I Ching* calls "seeing the great man" in others, meaning, we hold to the possibility of these elements in them, even though only the most negative elements may be visible. If it is impossible to conceive of the true self in another person, one may inwardly call upon these helping elements to interfere with the ego in them, when it is active.

Non-Action

Another sort of action is described in the *I Ching* that steadily mounts in intensity until it crests and collapses by itself. This is the rise and fall of the dark force—the ego relies on the use of power, fear, and doubt. The dark force is the ego element in a person that demands to be seen and verified. When we disengage and refuse steadfastly to recognize and verify another's ego, it increases its demand in ever stronger stages. If we refuse to feed it through a reaction, either inwardly or outwardly, it cannot maintain itself beyond a certain point. Then it crests and collapses upon itself. This cresting and collapsing is described in the sixth line of *Darkening of the Light* (Hex. 36) thus: "First he climbed up to heaven, then he plunged into the depths of the earth." The commentary says, "The dark power at first held so high a place that it could wound all who were on the side of the good and of the light. But in the end it perishes of its own darkness, for evil must itself fall at the very moment when it has wholly overcome the good, and thus consumed the energy to which it owed its duration." The same thing happens within us when we first consciously encounter the ego and resolutely hold fast against the power of darkness within ourselves. The lines of *The Taming Power of the Great (*Hex. 26) describe the challenge of the dark force

that I have often called “a crescendo of awfulness.”

Not acting is another action counseled by the *I Ching*. We receive this counsel in situations when perseverance in non-action is the best means by which the dark power is to be defeated. Non-action is also advised when it is not clear how we are to respond to situations. It literally means not to act in the external situation. We do, however, hold inwardly to what we know is correct. During the time that we do not know how to respond, we hold simply to the power of truth, even though we do not know what that is. It is enough that the Cosmos and the Sage know what it is. To hold to it energizes it.

During times when non-action is called for, *Preponderance of the Small* (Hex. 62) counsels us to wait in the *ambiguous spot* and do nothing. This indicates simply enduring the ambiguity. Waiting in ambiguity builds up inner strength; sometimes the buildup of this strength is enough to straighten the situation out; at other times, when we are inwardly firm and in harmony with our inner truth, the appropriate thing to say or do comes of itself. While waiting, we resist engaging with all the baited hooks that others’ egos put out to engage the ego in us. (We engage with their egos when we argue, strive, display our wisdom, wit, or sharpness, or otherwise try to push things to a conclusion.) *Preponderance of the Great* (Hex. 28) describes the ambiguous moment as an exceptional time in which it is possible to make great strides forward, if we pay great attention to maintain a correct attitude.

The ambiguous moment is full of potential because, to use computer terms, it is the moment in which an old, programmed way in which two people relate can be discarded and our original program, which is based on inner truth, is activated. In practical terms this means we resist any effort on the part of the ego or the inferiors to attempt to force the needed changes. We also resist any demand that the changes fit our specifications. Instead, we say the necessary inner no, turn the matter over to the Cosmos, and leave the matter of how and when the changes take place, up to it. In this way, the ego in ourself does not arouse the ego in them, which would prevent them from getting in touch with their inner truth.

Waiting in the ambiguous spot is galling to our inferiors, which have been conditioned to fear ambiguity. Because they have been taught to distrust the Cosmos and the help it can give, they point to the ‘threatening dangers of not acting. The pressure to ‘do something’ is pictured as a bulls horns and a rhinoceros’s tusk in lines four and five of *The Taming Power of the Great* (Hex. 26). This pressure is dangerous unless it is contained; we contain it when we clearly see that it is not time to act. Finally, almost without our noticing, the inner power of perseverance has its effect: Cosmic help is engaged and the obstacles are overcome. When this happens, we may receive the top line of this hexagram, which says, “He attains the way of heaven, success.” Through waiting and controlling our inner energy, the help needed came, and the victory was won. At this final moment, those who were hostile or unreceptive to change became open to us. This change is dramatic and inexplicable, outside the boundaries of any obvious process.

Waiting in the ambiguous spot involves risks and dangers that must be overcome if we are to succeed. *The Abysmal (Danger)* (Hex. 29) refers to the danger that may cause us to abandon our path if we entertain even the slightest doubt. Doubt may cause us to make some move to solve the problem; for example, we may give up on ourselves, or on others, or on the Cosmos. These moves cause us to lose our partnership with the Sage. Because they are also against our inner nature, they result in darkening our inner light. Once we overcome this first level of danger, we may encounter threats on a second level, as in feeling alienated toward those who made us “suffer through such trying situations,’ as our inferiors would put it. Or, the pressure of the situation may cause us to fall into conflict with others. If we conquer these risks, we may

receive the fifth line in *Before Completion* (Hex. 64), that confirms having persevered through the situation to the end: “Perseverance brings good fortune. No remorse. The light of the Superior Man is true. Good fortune.”

The taming and holding on to inner strength is discussed in the main text of *The Taming Power of the Great (Hex.* 26), when it speaks of daily self-renewal. “Holding still, holding back, and holding together” are the means of remaining at the peak of our inner strength. *Holding still* means refusing to listen to the suggestions of the ego to take outer action. *Holding back* means being prepared (aware) that the ego might want to break out and act through restlessness and whims, to force things its way. We hold strictly to reticence. *Holding together* means not departing from what we know to be correct (inner truth). We rely instead on allowing our firmness in holding to what is correct to penetrate to the other: we are uncompromising in saying no to the incorrect situation while not losing the integrity of our personality through shutting the other person off as hopeless.

The sort of *patience in waiting* referred to in the *I Ching* is a unique focusing of will in which we hold to what the Sage can do when we ask it to intervene with the ego in another. In this case, we ask the Sage in that persons presence. (The Sage exists in everyone’s presence, but if the ego is active in a person, the Sage is unable to interfere unless someone outside him asks it to do so.) When this asking is combined with asking the Sage in our own presence to intervene with the ego in ourself, both egos are displaced for the duration of that situation. The effect is the creation of harmony. This kind of patience is made possible by experiencing the effect of this intervention for ourselves, and by realizing that we, by ourselves, are totally unable to achieve such a harmonious result. Although these effects are temporary, it is possible to ask, everyday, for this kind of help for all our situations The more we ask for this help, the more those for whom we have asked it, experience the beneficial effect of their true selves being free of the grip of the ego. To have this experience, we need only to ask for the Sage to intervene in another’s presence. Seeing its effect, we recognize that there is no need to “be powerful,” or to exercise power. By accepting our own powerlessness, we constantly enable the Sage to apprehend and bring the ego in others under control.

On observing these results, we also need to be aware of what can also cause regressions in situations. Upon experiencing such a dramatic success, we may grow careless, allowing the ego to suggest that it was all an illusion. Being conditioned to think such things cannot happen, a veil of forgetfulness is thrown around the Cosmic help we have received. Or, the ego attempts to credit itself, by suggesting the changes came about through the “power of ones personality.” Or, it sluffs the success off to “mere chance,” or “the success would have happened anyway.” Allowing such fantasies causes the success to vanish, as the Cosmic help retreats. We need perseveringly to be aware of the ego's incessant ambition and its tempting us to relax into a careless self-confidence. Its wiles are defeated by cleansing our minds of all such thoughts each day, and asking the Sage to interfere with the ego in ourselves.

Since it is impossible to free ourselves of entrenched habits of mind all at once, the ego uses a variety of wiles to retain or regain control. One of the least obvious of these is its seeking to take over our self - development, in order to attain a “high degree of spirituality.” In its search to be recognized in this way, it pursues self-development with a passion. Spiritual ambition, thus, is one of the most seductive of all the ego’s wiles. Once involved, it strives to make swift progress toward the goal. When swift progress does not produce results, it heaps blame on the true self. Its great leaps of effort and its thinking that limitation means practicing galling self-limitation, confuses and harms our will to continue. To prevent these problems, it is best to adhere to a gradual, step-by-step process that includes effort, making mistakes, and self-forgiveness. It is unreasonable to expect too much, too soon, as the *I Ching* says in *Limitation* (Hex.

60). To avoid the egos using the back door of spiritual ambition, “We must put limitation, even upon limitation.”

Furthering, The Creative Experience

It is the nature of the Cosmos to “further,” *The Creative* (Hex. 1) states. Furthering, in *I Ching* terms, means making progress toward the fulfillment of our Destiny. When we consult the *I Ching* for the first time and it replies that if we relate properly we will be furthered, we interpret this to mean that our goals of the moment will be attained, or great strides in this direction will be made. This interpretation may cause us to overlook the simpler everyday meaning of furthering, namely that the first step toward any goal is to see with clarity what needs to be done. Furthering, in *I Ching* terms, generally means seeing with clarity the inner truth of the situation. For only then does the correct decision of what to do become obvious.

Each step in furthering grounds us more firmly in our sense of inner truth; step by step our experience of the way things work becomes a whole body of knowledge on which we can rely. When we finally see with inner knowing how well inner truth mounts to success, it is no longer such an effort to persevere. The attainment of inner clarity gives us strength to wait, if waiting is needed, for in seeing events in the context of the way things work on the Cosmic scale, all sense of threat that occurs with shock and ambiguity disappears. Clarity, we find, *is* strength, therefore it is not surprising that the work of the Sage is to help us to attain it. Having clarity is the difference between seeing a garden at ground level, where no semblance of order is visible, and seeing it from a sufficient height whereby the orderliness of the rows becomes visible.

Furthering advances our understanding as we go to the next step in any undertaking, whether it be in the development of new inventions, creative projects, or the next step in our perception of the Cosmic Order. Through the creative experience, a pianist, while practicing a passage, stumbles across a new and better way of playing it. The writer seeks a way to express something that he knows within, but has not yet found words; then, an idea comes quite suddenly that allows the whole of his insight to unfold. The artist, muddled about a section of his painting; suddenly finds the exact color and form that fits there. In all of these situations, furthering has occurred as a breakthrough, or sudden perception that furthers the creative expression. Sometimes this breakthrough occurs as a mental image; sometimes we understand without being aware of seeing or hearing anything; the answer seems to well up from below, or to enter our heads from above. We experience it differently at different times, and each of us experiences it in different ways, but always, it is in the form of *receiving*. Once it begins, we let it happen and keep open to it, for we know that if we interfere we will lose our connection with it, and it will cease. If the creative experience happens in visual form, what we see is a *Cosmic picture*. It has a lot of detail, each bit of which is part of the answer we seek.

An ancient Chinese commentator on the *I Ching* said that if we want to understand the meaning of a hexagram, we need to follow the images it presents as a hunter follows a rabbit. The images spark a thought process in our minds that may be ‘followed’ in this manner. We do not interfere with the process, we merely follow it; but if our thoughts go so far as to lose sight of the original images, he said, we go too far. The creative experience begins in a similar manner: Something is sparked and we follow it without interfering. Our intellect may serve to remember it, or write it down, or otherwise bring it to fruition, but in every case our intellect remains a servant and follower, not a leader.

Each of us has experienced the creative experience in some way or another. We have done this when we were in a particular state of mind. We come upon this state accidentally, and like Alice falling into the hole that led to Wonderland, we forget how we got there. The *I Ching,* through the hexagrams, develops our awareness of the doorway to the meditation state, and of the rules surrounding our use of the creative product that results.

In order to have access to the creative experience there must first be a need to know. Perhaps it is essential to ask, either consciously, or through desperately longing to know; it is a kind ot cry to Heaven. The question serves to acknowledge our need, and it contains the modest recognition that in and of ourselves, we do not know the answer, and that we cannot, without help, find it. This humble sort of acknowledgment invokes the creative experience. Recognition that the creative product is a gift from the Cosmos keeps the doorway open tor us. *Inner Truth* (Hex. 61), line four, reflects this principle when it says, "The moon nearly at the full." The moon's ability to reflect the light of the sun is given as an image of modesty. However, as it is noted in the commentary, "To intensify the power of inner truth, a man must always turn to his superior, from whom he can receive enlightenment as the moon receives light from the sun...This requires a certain humility like that of the moon when it is not yet quite full. At the moment when the moon becomes full and stands directly opposite the sun, it begins to wane...we must be humble and reverent when face to face with the source of enlightenment."

It is also important that what we seek, in gaining the help of the Sage, must be unselfish. The great musician seeks to express the eternal genius of the music, not his virtuosity; the inventor sees that his invention will benefit many people; the writer sees that his work will help others attain insight into the problems of their own lives; all this is to say that great insight is given to the person who is motivated by the worth of what he is doing.

Contemplation is the effort to see, to bring into conscious focus the connections between our external experience and its origins in the image world. If we can understand the external experience in its Cosmic setting, we can relate it to all other things. This need to see, or to solve a particular problem, comes into our life as a sort of Cosmic Puzzle, or koan. To solve the puzzle, it is necessary to seek help from the Cosmos. In this way we come back into contact with it, and thereby learn about our true natures and the meaning of life.

At first the ego tries to contrive the answer, in an attempt to mastermind the problem. It is the way of the Cosmos that this assault upon the puzzle is fruitless. Only when we let go, recognizing that we are unable to solve the puzzle, and that it is not in our power to do it, does the answer come freely as a gift. When we first come into contact with the creative experience we are undeveloped and do not know how to relate to it. For a time we steal the ideas by trying to use them for selfish purposes, as Alberich, of Norse legend, stole the Rhinemaidens' gold. We lose the help of the Cosmos many times before we develop the humility to treat the Sage with a correct gratitude and humility. The *I Ching* calls our misunderstanding of the way things work, "Contemplation through the crack of the door" (see *Contemplation* (Hex. 20), line one).

Ram Dass reports something similar in his book, *Grist for the Mill*. Time and again he tried to mastermind the answer to his *koan* while in the Zen monastery. Finally, he concluded that he could not find the answer, immediately upon admitting this to himself, the answer came. Eugen Herrigel, author of *Zen in the Art of Archery,* reports a similar experience. After he had spent five years practicing the techniques that lead to "letting go of the bowstring without conscious thought," the challenge that was his *koan,* he finally gave up in exasperation, admitting that he "just couldn't do it." Instantly and effortlessly

the string flew from his hand and the arrow hit its mark.

I experienced this phenomenon one day while playing tennis. On this occasion I played tennis as I never had before, with the awareness that I, in and of myself, could not do it, and that the Cosmos does it. As long as I allowed the Cosmos to be a part of the process, my playing and responses were far beyond their customary levels. When I interfered, thinking it would 'be better to go cross-court this time' or 'down the line', my shots misfired. This demonstrated to me clearly that there is a specific way of relating to the creative experience that we need to learn if we are to enable the Cosmos to work through us. It was impossible for me to acquire this connection with the creative experience either by intention or sheer willpower. My wanting to win blocked it; feeling proud of a shot blocked it; engaging with my opponent's competitive ego, by wanting to reply with a particularly good shot also blocked it. Attempting to duplicate my relationship with the Cosmos, in order to play as well again also failed. Nor could I outwit the process by adopting an attitude of not caring whether or not I won. Only when I came to accept that it was simply enough to play to the best of my ability, while accepting the ups and down of the game equally, did I again connect with the creative experience. This attitude, that was honest and modest, showed me how much the Cosmos values modesty and simplicity.

When we understand the Cosmic principle of following and allowing ourselves to be led by the Sage, we find that we are guided to entirely new ways of doing things. Later, we realize that we were being prepared for an important change that is also part of the creative experience. For example, for five years I led a small *I Ching* discussion group in weekly meetings. Then one day I had a meditation in which I saw our group sitting in a train station that was located on an unused spur of railroad track. "No one went there anymore," the voice in my meditation said. Then I saw a train station like that of Grand Central Station in New York City during the days when it was the center of train travel throughout the United States. I saw myself walking through the station and stopping at a book stall. There, for sale on one of the book shelves, was my book on the *I Ching* and all that I had learned of the *I Ching* was available to those who were receptive to it. For the past seven years, I had been keeping a card file with 64 sections in it, one for each hexagram. Each time I had an insight into what a hexagram or line referred to, I wrote it down on a card and put it in the file. I had not thought of putting my notes into a book, for my impression was that the material probably applied only to me. I had noticed, however, that people who came to my *I Ching* group would ask to look up their hexagrams in my card file, and that they felt my notes were helpful to them. After this meditation I consulted the *I Ching* to see if I was meant to compile my insights into a book. The answer confirmed that it was time to give up running the *I Ching* group and to devote myself to publishing what became *A Guide to the I Ching.* I also understood then that the collection of essays I had written on the overall *I Ching* viewpoint were to be put into this book, and that the collection of my experiences in meditation was to be a third book, *The Other Way.* This and other meditations, combined with consulting the *I Ching*, helped me understand how I was to do these tasks.

Often, we receive help from the Cosmos that we do not even know we need. When I began to write this chapter on the creative experience I thought it would only be a small section, because I had only a few pages of notes on the subject. As soon as I began it, however, I was prevented from writing by other work that unexpectedly intervened. Meanwhile, I had meditations on aspects of the subject I was then not aware of. I soon realized that the blockage had the purpose of helping me with this section. Help comes, when we are open to it, as the "next step in our progress," enabling us to complete our work in the best possible way. Interruptions and unexpected blockages often have an important purpose that we later realize were absolutely essential to what we were trying to achieve.

When we attain a close working relationship with the Sage/Cosmos, we find that not only do the ideas come to us, but also the supporting material comes as well. Some years ago I experienced this phenomenon when I was working on a writing project that needed documentation. For months I kept receiving clippings from friends who were aware that I was working on this material. Others would see books in libraries and bring them to me. This continuous help that came from so many quarters at the precise time I needed it, seemed phenomenal to me at the time, for I knew nothing, then, of the way the Sage can come to help.

The creative experience cannot happen if we are indolent, or if, when we experience a pause in our progress, we feel that going on requires too much effort. Our basic movement toward growth and learning cannot be allowed to shut down.

Similarly, doubts and negative thoughts block the creative experience, as do having fixed opinions, or even desiring the experience too much. After asking for help, we need to place ourselves in the mind of letting it happen, then let go of the matter.

The first line of *Increase* (Hex. 42) points out the obligation we assume when we are helped by the Cosmos. It says, “If great help comes to a man from on high, this increased strength must be used to achieve something great for which he might otherwise never have found energy, or the readiness to take responsibility. Great good fortune is produced by selflessness, and in bringing about good fortune, he remains free of reproach.” Here, achieving something great refers to bringing to completion the tasks given us to do in a manner that is consistent with our inner truth. What that task is, only the individual concerned knows.

The creative experience comes to help when and where it will— in the early morning, in the middle of the night, while we are gardening or driving a car. When it comes, we need to attend to it at that moment. We serve it, through our attentiveness, to bring it into our lives. If we fail to attend to it, it goes the way dreams do, quickly into the mists of forgetfulness; then we miss our opportunity to receive it and to incorporate it into our body of inner truth.—*The Clinging* (Hex. 30), line four, says of clarity, “Its coming is sudden, it flames up, dies down, is thrown away.”

The creative experience comes at the most appropriate times. Once, I was advising a group on publishing a history. In meditation during the morning on which the first meeting was to be held, I received an entire sequence of thoughts about what the group would need to lo, along with what they would need to know. I was to organize them into a voluntary publishing company in which some of them would edit, others would do the graphics, others the research, others the typesetting, and so on, and I would manage and coordinate the whole. Here, ready-made, was the agenda I needed for the meeting. The meeting, it turned out, flowed smoothly and the project was off to a good start. When nothing like this occurred before the next meeting I simply listened to what the other members had to say. I became aware as I listened that I had overlooked an important step in the procedure. Afterward, although the next meeting was a month away, I began to worry that I might have forgotten something else that was crucial to know in the early stages of the project. Two or three nights later I awoke at 3:00 in the morning with an insight of what I needed to remember for the next meeting; after writing this down I went back to bed. Soon, another reminder came and I again got up wrote it down. When this happened a third time I thought, in exasperation, “Why, at 3:00?” I was then too awake to sleep, so I meditated. Presently I saw moving clouds; as I watched, they formed themselves into a wry, smiling face that said, “If you had not become impatient through doubting, you would have received help at a more convenient time.”

The joy attending the birth of the creative product is great. As it unfolds we may find ourselves elated, and want to pause and tell everyone of our happiness. The commentary to *The Judgment* in *Influence* (Hex. 31) speaks of keeping joy in bounds. That advice applies particularly in this instance. If we give way to the feeling of joy, the birthing process is interrupted and the feeling of joy takes over. The creative experience is like an entire birthing process: first the head comes through, then the shoulders, then the hips and feet, then the afterbirth. We must let the whole thing happen with an attitude of patience, otherwise we receive only a part of the message; that might lead us to draw conclusions prematurely about the context in which the experience is to be understood. The context must be allowed to come through, too, otherwise we have the egg without knowing what to do with it. I have often had three-part meditations, any part of which might have been mistaken for a single message. The Cosmos has a way of signaling when the meditation or insight is complete. It is as if something says, "That is all." Sometimes we understand it to be: "That is all for now; more will come later, as you need it." All that is said here about the meditation experience and the creative experience can be applied to major life experiences that spur our growth. The creative experience is a gift from the Cosmos. Nothing is so great as the serenity and appreciation we feel when we recognize the Creative Hand in everything around us, and of realizing that we have been a part of it.

Footnotes

1. For a thorough discussion of the principle of coming to meet the key ingredient in relationships, see my book, *Love, An Inner Connection, Based on Principles Drawn from the I Ching*, Anthony Publishing Company, Stow, 1993.

7. Goals

The *I Ching* mentions goals in several hexagrams and their lines.

For example, the third line of *Before Completion* (Hex. 64) urges us not to "lose sight of the goal," although it does not state what the goal is. The titles of several hexagrams, however, have to do with these goals; they are, for example, *Fellowship with Men* (Hex. 13), *Peace* (Hex. 11), and *Gathering Together* (Hex. 45). *Fellowship with Men* defines one of these goals as "true fellowship among men," but typical of the *I Ching*, rather than saying that is the goal, it assumes it, by simply defining the principles upon which true fellowship is made possible: "True fellowship among men must be based upon a concern that is universal. It is not the private interests of the individual that create lasting fellowship among men, but rather the goals of humanity." In consulting the *I Ching* over a period of time we find that this means that fellowship must be based on what is in harmony with inner truth, and therefore also with the Cosmic harmony. It cannot be based either on private prejudices and vanities, or on the goals of any factions. Indeed, we find that the goals of mankind are the same as the deepest goals of the individual: to fulfill one's nature through following one's inner truth.

While these and similar hexagrams counsel us not to doubt our goal, we are counseled against becoming god-oriented. From the viewpoint of the *I Ching*, our goals are achieved only by each of us working at relating correctly to the people around us, with whom we have daily business, and with whom we are inwardly connected. It becomes clear, also, that not all people are within our sphere of responsibility, nor are they meant to be our main locus. We are not meant to solve all the problems of the world, for indeed, every person has the ability to ask for Cosmic help for all his needs.

Once we understand our goal, we are not meant to fasten on attaining it ambitiously, as when we seek to have that goal materialize within a particular period of time. We do only as much and no more than answer the essence of the matter put straight in front of us at any one time.

Universal Goals

The greater goals of mankind are those of equality, justice, peace, and human-heartedness; they involve the ascendancy of the true over the false self, and of inner truth over the ego. Only by correcting ourselves can we inspire trust in others to follow their own inner truth. Only by reducing the ego in ourselves can we become freed of the arrogance that creates factions and inequality in the world. When we cease to believe that power resolves any conflict, will opposition between our human will and the Cosmic Will disappear.

In contemplating the call made in *Fellowship with Men* (Hex. 13) to free ourselves of those reservations of attitude by which we set ourselves apart from all the other people and things that exist, as special, we recognize those decadent social attitudes that are spoiled from the *I Ching* point of view. Among such spoiled ideas is the one that man was given dominion over the earth and all things in a proprietary way; this idea gives the human being, and often particularly the human male, the idea that he has a God-given right to act with arbitrary power over the earth and all things. The hexagram, *Possession in Great*

Measure (Hex. 14), counsels a different view: ‘A magnanimous, liberal-minded man should not regard what he possesses as his exclusive personal property, but should place it at the disposal of the ruler, or the people at large. In so doing, he takes the right attitude toward his possession, which as private property can never endure.” The ruler, in this case, is the Sage/Cosmos, and the liberal-minded man represents the man who attains true modesty by finding his correct place in the Cosmic order. This and other hexagram lines indicate that life finds its meaning when we fulfill our true natures, and thus, bring ourselves into balance and harmony with all things.

It is not that an ideal state of harmony is ever achieved, for the ego, even if it is routed out of our personalities, is always ready to return, if we fall into the most subtle of all flatteries, that we are “spiritually developed." It is likewise ready to return through the subtle intimidations offered by others who do not understand our way of relating, that we will somehow be excommunicated from the social fabric. Neither these flatteries nor intimidations need to bother us, however, if we remember to be sincere (modest) in our way of life. The task of the true self is ever to remain conscientious, refraining from taking up more space than it needs, to live in the world. Thus, we leave space for all the other living things. The true self, likewise, is economical, not using up more resources than it needs; it never gives up caring, to become indifferent, therefore its acts do not lead to unnecessary suffering. In this way it helps to create peace and order in the world.

Gathering Together (Hex. 45) presents an image of people rallying behind what is correct in the community. “Only collective moral force can unite the world.” This is made possible through “great offerings,” meaning the voluntary relinquishing of the personal excess that leads to suffering in the world. One principle that became evident to me while consulting the *I Ching* was the principle of being content to have enough. Over a number of years after I began consulting the *I Ching* I noticed that each year I seemed always to have made just enough money to meet my needs. One year when a family circumstance caused me to lose $5000,I thought, well, this is one year I will be $5000 behind. Unexpectedly, my older brother, who knew nothing of my circumstances, gave me a gift of $5000, making up the deficit. During the next year I began to wonder if he might do it again. When he did not, I had a meditation in which the words came: If you look to your brother (or others) to get what you need, sometimes you will get it, sometimes not. But if you look to the Cosmos to get what you need, then you will get all that you need. Since that time I have learned to be content, not only to look to the Cosmos for what I need, but also to be content that whatever amount comes, it's enough. I have since recognized that if people were content to have enough, there would be enough to go around, and human beings would function in much better harmony with the earth on which they live.

Holding Together (Hex. 8) also lists some of the essential components by which people hold together into a correctly functioning social order. This holding together happens spontaneously when and wherever individual people hold to their inner truth. It happens through spontaneous attraction. “Police measures are not necessary.” The same principle of freedom is valid for life in general.” Indeed, throughout the *I Ching* the principle of freedom echoes over and over. The only bonds are those created by natural attraction and natural affection; the only leadership is that created by inner truth, combined with gentleness and friendliness. *The Joyous* (Hex. 58) says in this regard, that when “the hearts of men are won by friendliness, they are led to take all hardships upon themselves willingly, and if need be will not shun death itself, so great is the power of joy over men.” Force, pressure, or even the mildest use of leverage is against the dignity of the individual, and against the way of the Cosmos. A social organization that is formed on these principles really “meets the needs of the people.” Its leaders hold those around them purely by the strength and truth of their personalities. As *The Judgment* in *Following* (Hex. 17) says,

it is only when our leaders are consistent in “doing right,” together with “no blame,” that we can follow them without coming to harm.

Just as we learn to say an inner no to correct the misdemeanors of others around us, we say the inner no to decadence and decay in society as a whole. Politicians know exactly how far people will allow them to go, and what issues and values are really important to the people. When people are individually firm in their principles, then government will represent the best interests of the people.

Individual Goals

Although our original purpose in consulting the *I Ching* may be to rescue ourselves from the depressive causes and effects of a personal situation, we may find it necessary to rescue the others with whom we are involved, as well. Rescuing them, however, has nothing to do with the idea that we save them in the religious sense. The idea of proselytizing, to convince someone of our beliefs, or to save their souls, is completely contrary to the *I Ching* point of view. The *I Ching* does not support any kind of feelings of superiority, such as being on the top of a spiritual ladder of the enlightened, nor does it support that we have any right to instruct others in what is right. Rescuing does not mean that we bring them around to our viewpoint by subtler means, or that we require others to conform to some standard we think is necessary. Rescuing means not executing people by giving them up as hopeless, but also allowing ourselves to be guided by the Sage to relate to them correctly. By following our own inner truth, by asking for help for each situation, by calling on the Sage in others (and in ourselves) to intervene with the ego in them, we call them back to listen to and follow their inner truth.

The idea of keeping an open mind and an open heart through perseverance permeates the *I Ching*. This indicates that we take care to see that we do not shut our hearts and minds, whatever others do. We do this not for their sakes, but to maintain our own openness. Holding our minds and hearts open does not mean that we give love in the face of flattery or intimidation by the ego in another; neither does it mean we put our lives on hold, to wait endlessly for a person to correct himself. It means that we retreat into neutrality while the ego dominates another, remaining open to his correcting himself. Meanwhile, we go on with our lives, detaching from the situation by turning it over to the Cosmos to resolve. We allow ourselves to be drawn to those who are interested in and are dedicated to knowing themselves.

Holding our minds open to another is the most creative thing we can do for them. If we look back over our own lives, we can always point with gratitude to at least one person who believed in us in such a way as to support the true self that they saw in us. I am reminded of a customer I once had in my business. About a year after he was gone from our area I received a telephone call from a man who was in the same business, inquiring whether I had ever had this man as a customer. When I acknowledged that I had he then asked, “Did he ever leave you with unpaid bills?” “No,” I replied. “Well,” he said, surprised, “you are the only one around here that he didn’t cheat ’ He had called and asked all the other owners of businesses like mine in the area. I could only relate my success as due to having maintained a cautious, but open-minded attitude toward this customer.

Keeping an open mind, as was mentioned earlier, changes the vibrations, or molecules in an entire area. I was told about a woman who had to walk every day in a dark area where a number of women had been robbed by a purse thief. On one occasion she felt wary about the man walking behind her. Wondering what to do she mentally prayed for help, then suddenly turned to him and said, “I am afraid to walk through this

area; would you mind escorting me?” He graciously took her arm and accompanied her safely through it. A few days later she read in the newspaper that this man had been identified as the purse thief.

Rescuing others, by avoiding categorizing them as hopeless, we are informed by the *I Ching,* is the work of the true self, and the work in life that fulfills us. In *Difficulty at the Beginning* (Hex. 3), the work of rescuing others is pictured as a wagon that we (as a horse) must pull. When we become depressed and would like to be rid of this burden we receive the line, “Horse and wagon part. Strive for union.” The line explains, “It is our duty to act, but we lack sufficient power. However, an opportunity to make connection offers itself. It must be seized. Neither false pride nor false reserve should deter us. Bringing oneself to take the first step, even when it involves a certain degree of self-abnegation, is a sign of inner clarity.” All of this is referring to keeping an open mind.

Such instructions refer mainly to correcting our inner attitude. Only rarely does the *I Ching* advise us to do something outwardly, for when our attitude is unobstructed, the right thing to say and do simply happens by itself when it is needed. The reverse happens when we permit negative ideas to inhabit our minds: They spill out involuntarily, spoiling moments when we could have a good influence on the situation.

We are likely to receive the third line of *Difficulty at the Beginning* (Hex. 3), “Horse and wagon part,” when we have already accepted suggestions by the ego to give up on the other person, or situation. Perhaps the person has been insensitive or unkind, and our pride, being wounded, complains bitterly. The investment in pride, through holding to wrongs and wounds, may be the chief obstruction to our making the meaningful connection with another, as this line recommends; it is also the rigidity and stubbornness of hurt pride that causes us to lack “sufficient power” to reunite with them, when they bring themselves back into harmony with themselves. The only solution, in such a case, is to reopen our minds, despite pride; in this way, we turn our backs on pride, thus ending the control of the ego over us.

From these examples we can see that correcting relationships requires correcting attitudes. By de-structuring older, narrow, and pride-based programs, we return to human-heartedness. In whatever ways our relationships have failed, due to the presence of faulty attitudes on our part, we need to correct these attitudes. Thus, rescuing others does not mean that we obsessively watch their path and interfere in their lives; it means that we let them go on their way alone without allowing the ego in ourselves to watch them, as if to prove its doubt that they cannot find their own way without our interference. Our work is ourself, their work is theirs; keeping our attitude moderate and just has a creative and good effect on everyone around us. Through allowing ourselves to be guided by the *I Ching*, we learn what action is appropriate to the moment. Through the practice of keeping open, we gradually recognize that this practice also makes us happy and at peace with ourselves. We likewise find that holding onto proud resentments puts us in conflict with ourselves and with life.

In *The Family* (Hex. 37), we learn that by correcting ourselves, we strengthen the family (our immediate circle of relationships), and thus provide for a true way of relating to others (the human family). Correcting ourselves, it needs to be added, often means saying an inner No to the arrogant attitudes and expectations of others within the family. Through practicing these principles in the family, the practice is gradually widened to include human relationships in general. Breaking the chain of decadent social attitudes that are passed down through the family from one generation to another is the work mentioned in *Work on What Has Been Spoiled* (Hex. 18). It points out that decadent traditions are carried on partly because they are our only example, and partly because we need to justify our parents to ourselves. When,

as fathers and mothers, we resolve our problems by following the way of the Sage, the family will have the chance to experience resolving difficulties in a different way. Then, whether relationships stay together or fall apart, whether situations are financially difficult or otherwise, the inner and emotional condition of all members of the family will not be damaged. This contrasts with the emotional and psychic damage that occurs to both children and adults when the old path of impatience and vindictiveness predominates. The word 'rescue', in *I Ching* terms, does not refer to saving an institution such as marriage, or property, or restoring the appearance of unity that so much concerns our society. Neither does it refer to the accepted view of how the social order "should" function; it refers to saving all that is true to our natures, which also means all that is good in ourselves.

A Job to Do

Anyone who is drawn to develop himself finds that his path advances the evolution of the Cosmos. However, not everyone who feels drawn by this inner call will follow the path to completion, for this work is a matter of free will.

In *The Ting* (Hex. 50), the student of the *I Ching* is challenged to see if he can "attain a true spirituality." This requires, we learn in this hexagram, that he "sacrifice that which is of the highest earthly value." We find, over and over, that it means one thing: relinquishing the ego and its guidance. And who is it that must give up the ego? Only the true self can choose to dispense with the ego. For awhile this choice is not clear, for it appears, even to the true self, that the ego is so strong that it is powerless against it. This impression, however, is due to the investment we have made in the ego in the first place, back when as a child, we were trained to think of the ego as an indispensable defense of self. When the true self sees this mistake clearly, it is able to dispense with the ego, and to break free from its fear of assuming leadership of the self.

Admittedly, the path is rigorous, for the breaking of decadent patterns means sacrificing certain comfortable habits of mind, and making a determined resistance to fears and doubts. This work also separates us for a time, both outwardly and inwardly, from friends who are continuing on an ego path. Separation from the old crowd simply happens without any intention on our part because, as it is put in *Standstill* (Hex. 12), the reality of the Cosmos, and the reality of man-made views that have created the ego, cannot relate. The feeling is similar to that of casting off in a boat and leaving the security of the shore (the old patterns) behind. This situation is reflected in the third line of *Following* (Hex. 17): "If one clings to the strong man, one loses the little boy. Through following one finds what one seeks. It furthers one to remain persevering." The commentary explains, "When the right connection with distinguished people has been found, a certain loss naturally ensues. A man must part company with the inferior and superficial. But in his heart he will feel satisfied, because he will find what he seeks and needs for the development of his personality. The important thing is to remain firm. He must know what he wants and not be led astray by momentary inclinations." The "strong man" and "distinguished company" refer to the Sage, and to ones inner truth.

Sometimes, too, we become separated, but only outwardly, from people with whom we have a deep, inner connection. This happens mostly because they do not yet understand what the changes in us mean. Their egos make them feel unsettled and suspicious, and certainly, because we retreat from their egos, the egos in them make them think we have abandoned them. Being separated from them also causes feelings of stress and confusion in ourselves, bringing to the surface our fears of being isolated and abandoned. We

must therefore exert great energy to endure these uncomfortable situations. At such times we may receive the fifth line in *Fellowship with Men* (Hex. 13), that speaks of this sense of separation. It confirms that the separation eventually will end: “Men bound in fellowship first weep and lament, but afterward they laugh. After great struggles they succeed in meeting.” During such difficult times it is necessary to ask the Cosmos for help to endure, and to relate correctly to the unpleasant situation.

The work that is achieved through withdrawal from decadent customs and attitudes is described in the sixth line of *Work on What Has Been Spoiled* (Hex. 18): “He does not serve kings and princes, sets himself higher goals.” Withdrawal, it cautions, “does not imply a right to remain idle or sit back and merely criticize. It is justified only when we strive to realize in ourselves the higher aims of mankind. For although the Sage remains distant from the turmoil of life, he creates incomparable human values for the future.”

On entering the work of developing ourselves we need to recognize that this process requires time, for every lesson has to be directly experienced if we are to deprive our fears of their insidious power; however, through encountering numerous dead-ends and making our way through the maze of beliefs and disbeliefs, inner truth accumulates to a strength it never had before. Our inner development has been like that of a seed that has sprouted and worked its way through the soil to reach the air and light, then to slowly grow to become a tree that is well-developed and firmly rooted. Such an image is given in *Development* (Hex. 53).

The effect of ridding oneself, little by little, of the ego’s influence, is analogous to producing electricity; electricity is generated by rotating a solid piece of pure copper inside windings of pure copper wire; this causes electrical charges to be given off onto the wires leading from the generator as electrical current. This is possible because, in pure copper, all the molecules line up in exactly the same way. A similar effect is produced when our will is aligned with the Cosmic Will and our inner mind and heart are freed from the dregs of the ego; then we are in harmony with our original innocence. All thoughts that we have that are in harmony with the Cosmos penetrate to others without any effort on our part.

In responding to the *I Ching's* call to correct ourselves, we relinquish all ego-aspects of our personality as impurities. Rejecting the ego’s claim that it represents “our free will and right to guide ourselves,” is the meaning of sacrificing that which is of the “highest earthly value.” It pretends that it is our true self that is saying this, thereby creating confusion about what our true self is. It is indeed our free will and right to guide ourselves, but the ego appropriates it by pretending it is the true self which is saying it. What it wants is to hold onto its control over us, and its enslavement of the true self to its false values. Becoming clear about the tactics of the ego and its pretenses of being our true self, is essential. This is the step referred to in the commentary to the third line of *The Ting* (Hex. 50), which speaks of “seeing to it that we are possessed of something truly spiritual.” The freeing of the personality from the ego creates an inner strength that is equivalent to a complete absence of mistrust in our relationship with the Sage. This ridding the self of the ego means rejecting what we formerly accepted— all the images we have adopted of ourselves, as well as all grievances and resentments. It does not require forgiveness, for that is not ours to give; it merely requires relinquishment, a turning over to the Cosmos of all wrongs done us, and a vacuuming out of all negative feelings.[1]

There come times in our development that bring us to consider turning back to the way of the ego. At these times we receive the fourth line of *The Creative* (Hex. 1), that says, “Wavering flight over the depths. No blame." The commentary says, “A place of transition has been reached, and free choice enters in. A

twofold possibility is presented to the great man: he can soar to the heights and play an important part in the world, or he can withdraw into solitude and develop himself....There is no general law to say which of the two is the right way. Each one in this situation must make a free choice according to the inner law of his being. If the individual acts consistently and is true to himself, he will find the way that is appropriate tor him.'' The paradox of this line becomes clear when, upon receiving it, we reflect that the only real choice we have is to follow our inner truth. I once had a meditation that pointed out this out to me. Many previous meditations showed my inner house progressing from a dirty log hut to a tidy Swiss Chalet, then to a rather large Victorian house with handsome wood paneling inside. It was nice, I thought, feeling the spaciousness of its large rooms, but on the whole, it struck me as being too dark inside. It was definitely not the sort of house I would have chosen. Only one room, a kind of solarium that was upstairs and off my bedroom, had enough light. Then the message came: "You can live here comfortably for the rest of your life and be quite happy. If, however, you want the house that is truly yours, you must go further in your self-development." Having just gone through some difficult times, I wondered just what sort of self-development was meant. Immediately the message came, "You will have to face your worst fears." I shuddered as some of my money worries and fears came to mind. Then I looked around me once again at the dark house that did not suit my nature, and saw that I had no real choice; I would have to go on and face these fears.

The goal of freeing our true self within is not that of enlightenment. The goal is to find, face, and discard our fears. While this certainly lightens us up, it has nothing to do with the exalted idea of a state of enlightenment. As our fears are expelled, one by one, from our inner programming, we find that we are also filling in who we are; for indeed, rejecting fears and doubts is a process of saying no to situations that frighten us into conforming to wrong values. It is saying no to people whose rejection we fear, because of ancient threats of abandonment. Fortunately, these no's are inner ones that others hear with their inner ears only. They bypass the ego, therefore we are not confronted with difficult outer experiences as a consequence. Once we say these no's inwardly, it becomes much easier to say them outwardly without any emotion, but modestly and sincerely. At such times we might receive the second line from *Possession in Great Measure* (Hex. 14), that says, "A big wagon for loading." The commentary explains, "Great possession consists not only in the quantity of goods at one's disposal, but first and foremost, in their mobility and utility, for then they can be used in undertakings, and we remain free of embarrassment and mistakes. The big wagon which will carry a heavy load and in which one can journey far, indicates that there are at hand able helpers who give their support and are equal to their task. One can load great responsibility upon such persons, and this is necessary in important undertakings." Interpreted figuratively, this means that in following inner truth one gains the help needed from the inner world to keep free of embarrassment.

The path of unburdening ourselves progresses in levels. One plateau succeeds another as the true self, still in a childlike state within us, matures. What was too much is lessened; what was too little is increased. We become neither more than less than what we are. Clarity of mind is retained for longer periods. We become more aware of the encroachment within ourselves of tears disguised as indolence and carelessness; the problems that vexed us severely at first now trouble us far less. We are more and more able to face difficulties without fear, partly because we have begun to understand that by having accepted our limits, we receive help from the Cosmos. Having understood and accepted our dependence upon the Sage/Cosmos, we feel a new sense of inner independence which is the absence of dependence upon others. Inner growth and development free us from the overburden of misunderstanding and misconception that clouds our true nature. By lifting this burden away, the radiance of our true nature shines forth in its native brilliance. Cleared of debris, it is like a mirror that reflects the radiance of the

Sage (as the moon reflects the Sun) [2].

Three conceptions that tend to be expressed as disbeliefs are at the root of most of our inner growth problems. The first is our disbelief in our original goodness (by accepting the idea that we were born evil). The second is our disbelief in the fundamental goodness of life; this makes us doubt that by being true to ourselves and dependent on the Cosmos, life will work out for us. The third is our disbelief in the beneficent nature of the Cosmos, and that it is there to help us; the disbelief that it is personally accessible to us without anyone's help whatsoever, and that it stands as an active presence and force for good in our lives. By coming into harmony with ourselves we soon sense the true nature, presence, and immediacy of this entity called the Sage by the *I Ching*. Whereas at first we engage it only lightly, playfully, and with considerable skepticism. Then, through working with it in sincere humility, we come to experience its friendship, sense of humor, and wonderful accessibility.

Growth through the successive stages of becoming ourselves releases a number of virtues that we were born with: *Simplicity, Sincerity*, *Serenity*, *Gratitude*, and *Perseverance*. In realizing how they help us, they become supported by *Modesty*, the virtue that is the foundation of them all. All these virtues are one's treasures. They are what is referred to in *Shock* (Hex. 52), line two, when it says, “a hundred thousand times you lose your treasures.”

Simplicity is mentioned in the first line of *Treading* (Hex. 10) as following what feels correct, for its own sake, without thought of consequence or reward. “When a man is dissatisfied with modest circumstances, he is restless and ambitious and tries to advance, not for the sake of accomplishing anything worthwhile, but merely in order to escape from lowliness and poverty....Once his purpose is achieved, he is certain to become arrogant and luxury-loving....On the other hand, a man who is good at his work is content to behave simply. He wishes to make progress in order to accomplish something. When he attains his goal, he does something worthwhile, and all is well.”

Sincerity is to respond to the moment as it presents itself from one's deepest inner truth. If we do not know what to say or do, that does not mean we “abandon the field to the enemy” by giving up, as it is put in *Retreat* (Hex. 33); it indicates we wait, trusting the answer to come of its own accord. It also indicates, when situations are ambiguous, we avoid trying to make our views prevail. We also avoid attaching importance to the outcome, letting things happen as they will. When we develop attachment to the way things work out, it means that we have adopted a distrust of events; this distrust and attachment expresses itself as an inner pressure which the *I Ching* calls “pressing forward.” Pressing forward, which is always the work of the ego in us, invariably leads to failure and defeat. Attachment is what drives us to defend ourselves, and to strive to improve situations; in doing these things we only energize others' egos and throw ourselves away. Sincerity is to listen to and follow the small inner voice that arises from serenity and detachment.

Serenity refers to an attitude toward events that comes, not from a stoicism, by which we accept negative events as something we can do nothing about, but from a confidence that by following our inner truth, and by asking for Cosmic help, a way will show itself through them. When we have followed this path, we look back to see that the way that was blocked opened up, and that the negative event was often corrected simply because we remained true to ourselves. Serenity is a confidence that is acquired by having had many such experiences in which we have seen that holding to inner truth and acting from it has led consistently to success. We have attained a confidence that is not based upon a set of beliefs, but by having suspended our distrust and our disbelief. Serenity has come because we have seen that ambiguity

is often used by the Cosmos to create order. This observation has led us to trust our life and where it leads, and to trust the life process itself. It has led us to trust the Cosmos that gently guides us, and to trust that following our inner truth leads only to the good.

Gratitude is yet another of the great, fundamental virtues we naturally possess. It is a great healer, restoring us to wholeness when the ego tries to fill us with doubt. We lose our wholeness when the ego has made us forget the help we have already received from the Cosmos, and to forget that we can always ask for help, and to forget that the nature of the Cosmos is beneficent. Luckily, when I was in my early twenties I had an experience that taught me about gratitude and its healing abilities. That experience has remained as a sort of attitudinal benchmark to which I return when the ego has tempted me to forget all the good things I have learned. As soon as I remember this event, I return to inner peace and quiet. At the time, my husband and I had taken over a farm my father owned, in hopes of growing a large cash crop of Sweet Spanish onions, along with some other vegetables and fruits. No sooner had we planted many of the onions than a drought of 30 days began. We lacked any means of irrigation. It seemed to me that everything that could go wrong went wrong that summer. At the end, we were out of money and wit about what to do next. The farm lay in a most beautiful valley, where rare song birds provided an exquisite accompaniment to the clear, sunny days. One morning as I walked the half mile to the post box, depressed and defeated, I was suddenly struck by this surrounding beauty, and by the wonderful sounds. Simultaneously, I recognized that having been entirely focused on the success of our project, I had been blind and deaf to this beauty, which had drawn us there in the first place. How privileged I felt, at that moment, to be reawakened to that beauty. I also felt ashamed that I had allowed myself to be depressed, and had not been grateful to be healthy and alive, and there. Immediately, my depression floated away, and with this change of view, everything afterwards began to change for the better.

The experience of gratitude, obviously, is a wondrous event in our lives, a gift from the Sage when we most need it. All of us have had versions of this experience and can return to them as starting points for each new day. If we cannot remember some such experience in our lives, then it is possible that we have allowed the ego in us to throw a net of forgetfulness over them. This happens when we listen to the ego's protestations that we have credited the wrong source for our gifts: "they simply happened by happenstance." Gratitude, as can be seen, is a sudden appreciation of the gift of life, and for the chance to experience the wholeness of existence. It is also a deep feeling of thankfulness for being able to experience the wonders of life. Rejecting all the statements that tend to deny our gifts simultaneously removes the net of forgetfulness the ego has thrown around our good memories. Then, these memories become a wellspring from which we can draw, in moments of doubt.

Perseverance, as the word suggests, is an act of will to stand up to and resist the pressures that our ego puts on us through inspiring doubt and fear. Always, it is doubt and its underlying fear, that spring forth from the places where they have hidden themselves in our subconscious. They are primary fears stored in childhood, such as the fear that if we stand by our innermost feelings, we will somehow fail, or will be exposed to ridicule or suffering, or lose what we have, or lose face, or suffer humiliation, or not get the nourishment we need, or be abandoned. These fears play their mournful tunes, which, in turn, inspire the inferiors with doubt. The inferiors translate these doubts into voices that say, in regard to following our path, "Quit, give up, give in." In regard to the pressures of ambiguity, they say: "Do something, before it is too late!" In regard to threats of abandonment, they say, "Let go of this stubborn insistence on what you think is right, before you lose everything!" Perseverance, then, is to hold fast and determinedly against these voices until we have the strength to throw them out altogether. In the face of a determined perseverance, the fears, and the ego that inspires them, give way. That is the power of perseverance.

Modesty, as mentioned before, is the basis of all these virtues. Without modesty, the other virtues are merely intellectually motivated efforts on our part. Modesty is closely related to gratitude, but more than that, where gratitude is a remembrance of gifts, modesty is a remembrance of the goodness and greatness of the Cosmos, and of the wholesomeness of our dependence on it. It is a remembrance of ourselves as part of the whole, united with it, responsible to it. Modesty is also closely allied to simplicity. Unlike simplicity, though, which is a form of innocence and therefore is unconscious, modesty is a fully conscious respect we have for having been created, and for the space we occupy as an entity. It is an acknowledgment of our dignity, and a remembrance of our duty never to betray our self-worth. Modesty preserves our integrity by holding it as inviolable. Modesty keeps us from throwing ourselves away to gain the approval of others; it is that which requires us to withdraw from the encroachments and betrayals of others, even when this is extremely uncomfortable to do, as when doing it is at the risk of a permanent severance. This respect for self comes from an innate sense of our Cosmic origin; it makes us careful not to lose our center in relation to other beings, ideas, desires. That is why, in the daily affairs of life, modesty has to do with saying inner yes's and no's to the questions of daily life. It is saying yes to simplicity and sincerity, no to intention, flattery, and intimidation.

As we learn from hundreds of experiences, it is the small decisions that make all the difference in our lives. Doestoevsky observed in the foreword to his play, *The House of the Dead*, that the average murderer in prison made but one important wrong decision, often in a moment of passion, that led to his being imprisoned for life, or killed. Chinese philosophy differs in saying that the murderer has followed the road that led to the murder for a long time beforehand. The French novelist, Honor Balzac, had this view when he advised George Sand to draw the characters in her novels in such a way that the things they do are the only things possible for them to do, within the venue of the way their lives have developed. Other writers, as I, say something similar, that ones fate is a pattern of small decisions that are made day to day. At any given time, these decisions do not seem to be particularly important, yet as a whole they make all the difference in how our life turns out. A lifetime of ignoring one's dignity and self-respect makes a mockery of life's meaning. Being habitually respectful of ones self-worth acknowledges the Cosmic source from which we stem, and to which we return; it likewise acknowledges the importance of finding and fulfilling the work we are meant to fulfill in our lives. If we are true to ourselves, this work manifests automatically. Modesty; in a word, is being true to oneself, and therefore in harmony with the Cosmos.

Armed with these treasures—Simplicity, Sincerity, Serenity, Perseverance, and Modesty, a person has everything he needs to have a good and correct influence on others around him. He does not hide himself from the world, and "merely fraternize" with those like himself," as it is put in *Following (*Hex. 17), line one. He "mingles freely with all sorts of people, friends or foes." At the same time, the line continues: "We must have firm principles," in order that we do not "vacillate where there is only a question of current opinion." As the Sage humbly helps us by not deviating from Cosmic principles, we help others by following our own inner truth. This produces the kind of increase that "alone has power to help the world."

We begin to see that those of us who attend only to our small areas of responsibility are like the thousands of tent-poles holding up the tobacco cloth in the tobacco field. In the same way, by asking the Sage that is constantly in our presence to teach and help us, the world is corrected. In the patriarchal/feudal overlay of the *I Ching*, we are given an incorrect idea that the Sage is like a King and the world his Kingdom. This idea is carried out by giving the six lines positions, as in a hierarchical kingdom, with the second line representing an official in the provinces, the third the minister, and the fifth the ruler or prince. My

experience in consulting the *I Ching* is that it concentrates rather on a hidden structuring that influences events the way that throwing a stone into a pool produces ripples. These ripples extend ever outward. By the time a ripple reaches the shore, its origin is no longer seen. Therefore while the general text of *Progress* (Hex. 35) refers to “an enlightened ruler and an obedient servant” as “the condition on which great progress depends,” it might better read, “an enlightened teacher and a willing student,” for in actual experience, the Sage is not a demanding ruler, but a knowing entity that seeks only to help a person find his inner truth.

In a similar way, the second line of *Obstruction* (Hex. 39) says, “The king’s servant is beset with obstruction upon obstruction, but it is not his fault.” This applies to situations where, in following inner truth, a person encounters difficulties. Because we do not press our views outwardly, people do not always understand why we withdraw, or why we decline to participate in a situation that feels inappropriate. In the eyes of convention, correctness means putting aside such feelings, to keep things running smoothly. Inner truth, however, demands that we not sacrifice our inner worth in such a way. This means that we may sometimes be the bump in the road for others. Sometimes it is important to even say forthrightly what we feel is correct for us to do, or what feels incorrect for us. We do not tell others what they should do, but say what we feel is correct for to do, or not do. The fourth line in *Gathering Together* (Hex. 45) describes a man “who gathers people around him in the name of the ruler.” This means we automatically influence others for the good when we ourselves follow it. Here, the word ruler does not refer to a monarch or God, but to the ruling guideline in our lives: what is correct. In *Approach* (Hex. 19) we are warned, as students of the Sage, to avoid the dangers of using power to influence (as when the ego seizes the reins to superimpose its views, or will upon others). In the top line of *Nourishment* (Hex. 27) we are reminded of our heavy responsibility to nourish others correctly.

As followers of our inner truth, we find ourselves recognized by the Cosmos, and thus we win help to accomplish our tasks. In *The Taming Power of the Great* (Hex. 26), we are honored by the ruler (Cosmos) for adhering to our principles. In *Progress* (Hex. 35), we are informed that the leader who does not abuse his great influence, but who uses it instead for the benefit of the ruler (the Sage/inner truth), is showered with presents from the great man, who “invites him continually to his court.” That is to say, we are blessed by helpful events. In *Following* (Hex. 17) it is said, “the King introduces him to the Western Mountain,” which symbolizes how well-pleased the Sage is in its students. In *Pushing Upward* (Hex. 46), the “King offers him Mount Ch’i.” This refers to experiencing a sense of well-being and support. In *Increase* (Hex. 42), by bringing increase to others through ones inner firmness, the follower of inner truth is “presented before God" by the ruler. In *The Army* (Hex. 7), by achieving victory in the “wars” we are awarded “realms.” While this hierarchical language was undoubtedly added to the *I Ching* by the rulers of China for their own purposes, the Sage uses it as metaphors to inform us that when we are in harmony, all the helping forces of the Cosmos come to support our goals.

As students of the Sage we also learn to authorize our own existence. That is to say, the ego in others would pretend that it has the power to say whether we are worthwhile (have the right to exist). By recognizing that the ego has no such power, regardless of the status a person holds, we return the authorization we have by the Cosmos to exist, to ourselves. This is the meaning of the second line of *The Army*. It points out that our decorations are “earned.” Such words refer to the maturation of our true self, and to the growing up to adulthood of our inferiors. Our internal army, our self, once scattered and ruled by the ego, is once more in our own possession and integrated. No longer is the body in conflict with the soul, or the mind superior to, or the enemy of, the body. What is “authorized” is our unity with the Cosmic harmony.

Although each of us who is on the path recognizes others who are also on the path, and there is true comradeship, organizing such a comradeship, which is spontaneous, into an organization, or religion, is outside the way of following inner truth. The Sage supports us minute by minute, hour by hour, inasmuch as we are true to ourselves. The moment we allow any grandiosity, any self-righteousness, any pretenses of superiority or of being special, the Sage departs. In the same way, just as no person is authorized by the Cosmos to grant us special decorations and honors, neither can any person take away the authorization we have been given by the Cosmos, to exist. In following the *I Ching*, there is nothing to cling to for such security, such as a human organization, but we are satisfied, because when we are at one with the Cosmos and its harmony, we are under its protection. Without any human official approving of us, we nevertheless find that we are approved of by others. We are aware, too, that many people who have never seen the *I Ching* are walking their own path of inner truth.

The way of the Cosmos is to remain hidden. The way of the Sage is to remain unnoticed. The wisest thing is often hidden in the simplest event. Lao Tzu said, "Fools laugh at the Tao. If they did not laugh at it, it would not be the Tao." How else can it be that throwing pennies can teach one to be wise? It is the way of Tao to rear wise people in uncommon ways.

Although we do not see the Sage, or the Cosmic Helpers, we begin to perceive that they are at work everywhere. Lao Tzu said, the Sage is "the mother of the world" in one line, and "the father of the world" in another. What we come to value are the hidden things; we know and accept that they must be hidden and that they will never be approved by the ego, or by a consensus of opinion that is based on ego beliefs, or by convention.

We are able to keep our positions in this invisible Cosmic family so long as we continue to recognize that we are 'wanderers' in a strange land. This means that we are each singly responsible to the Cosmos. This happens when we understand the temptation to feel secure, and to become attached to being secure. It is then that we begin to presume, and in presuming, lose the way. We retain our positions only so long as we continue to maintain our conscious awareness of these temptations and our sincerity to stay on the path. No one is so well-established that he may not err. Therefore, the person following his inner truth is always ready to examine himself, as it is put in the fifth line of *Contemplation* (Hex. 20). "The highest good," we are informed by the sixth line, is not being free of blame, but in "knowing how to become free of blame." I was reminded of this recently when the words on a large billboard overlooking the Massachusetts Turnpike caught my eye with a new significance. Even though I had seen this billboard many times before, I saw it with new eyes: "You, too, can be replaced."

Book II of the *I Ching* says of those who consult and follow the *I Ching:* "He who succeeds in endowing his work with this regenerative power creates something organic, and...enduring." Again, "the perfected nature of man, sustaining itself and enduring, is the gateway of Tao and justice." In following the way of the Cosmos, a person accomplishes change through transformation—the natural effect of sincerity.

Our job is to put our own private world in order. This is done simply by putting ourselves in order. Putting ourselves in order makes us responsive to the Cosmic Will, and enables us to be a participant in its beneficial processes. Being responsive enables human beings to act as a conduit for the Cosmic Will, giving them the unique capacity to "further. " This work of furtherance brings happiness.

Footnotes

1. I do not wish to imply that we turn a blind eye on deeds that clearly are wrong, for a part of the work of self-development is to recognize and validate what we see and feel. I mean rather that only the Cosmos can rightly forgive. Our job is to relinquish our attachment to wrong deeds that others have done; this frees the matter to have its natural Fate, which is to return in a circular way to its initiator. We interfere with this process and let a person off the hook of his mistake when we hold onto grievances, or seek personal retribution. (See Inner Withdrawal as Punishment in Chapter 7.)

2. Many people are amazed by the vibrations they sense coming from the great gurus of the world. What they do not realize is that these people have learned to absorb and reflect back to their adherents the adoration they receive from them. The more adoring and the greater the number of adherents, the more these feelings become concentrated in them, and the stronger these vibrations are felt by the adherents. Those people who have not yet ‘filled in’ their intrinsic space and who are susceptible to adoring or being greatly impressed by others are apt to feel these vibrations strongly, whereas people who have a strong sense of their own dignity, and who have filled in their intrinsic spaces, do not feel them at all.

8. The Lines, Trigrams, and Hexagrams

The 64 hexagrams of the *I Ching* are thought by researchers to have originated from a simpler oracle composed of three lines, or trigrams. That system, in turn, originated in a much earlier system by which a simple yes or no answer was obtained, perhaps by throwing a stick, or by tossing a coin or a similar two-sided object.

Thus, there was a steady progression from the yes/no oracle to an oracle composed of three lines, which provided for a definite yes (three yang lines) a definite no (three yin lines), a yes which was possibly conditioned (two yes's and one no), and a no which also was possibly conditioned (two no's and one yes).

Emphasis gradually shifted from looking at the trigrams thus produced as yes and no answers, to contemplating the forms created by the three lines, in which their vertical placement in the trigram was taken into account. It became important whether the yes or no line fell at the bottom, in the middle, or at the top of the trigram. Gradually, viewing the lines in this new way caused the yes/no oracle to slip into the background.

Three yang (light) lines thus came to be seen as the 'light force,' and three yin (dark) lines as the 'dark force.' Yang, as the light, became equated with the firmament and the image-world, from which all things manifested; yin, as the dark, became equated with the earth, and the "ten-thousand things of existence," as Lao Tzu put it, which had manifested out of the image world. Gradually these took on new characteristics as the three lines of the trigrams were extended to representing people and things. Three yang lines were seen as the "male principle" while three yin lines were seen as the "female principle." Certain animals were seen as represented by each trigram, as were directions of the compass, and features apparent in nature, such as the mountain, the lake, fire, and so on.

Eventually, one trigram was placed on top of another, with the meaning of their interactions becoming the subject of speculation. It is possible that the speculations were confirmed or denied by the yes no oracle. In any case, the six-line hexagram system became established, and the yes/no oracle more or less disappeared. The *I Ching* oracle that we see today was certainly the product of a long and steady development. Once the oracle was brought into book form, it was also edited to bring the book into conformity with the various Chinese philosophical systems of thought that also developed, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and religious Taoism.

The Hexagram Lines

The lines of a hexagram are obtained through the coin toss, or yarrow stalk manipulation, one at a time, until the six lines are obtained. The hexagram is built from the bottom upward, with the first line being the bottom line and the sixth the top line.

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The Yang and Yin lines were traditionally obtained by varied means, depending upon where people lived. By the seaside the tortoiseshell oracle was used. That is, tortoise shells, burned in a fire, were seen to reveal patterns of Yang and Yin lines. In the countryside the yarrow-stalk oracle was used because of the special vegetative powers believed to exist in the yarrow plant. As time went on, the more popular coin method referred to in this book was used. Both the yarrow-stalk and coin methods make it possible to obtain either the odd or even numbers needed to build a hexagram. The odd numbers obtained were assigned to Yang lines, the even numbers to Yin lines.

Yang numbers are represented by a solid, straight line (-), as this was believed to mirror the outgoing movement of the light force. Yin numbers are represented by a broken line (--), as this was believed to mirror the inward movement of the dark force. The Yang line is pictured as moving outward to the point of its maximum thrust (<->), at which point it severs in the middle, becoming a Yin line (--). The Yin line then moves inward and toward the center (-><-); when it reaches its maximum movement, the two Yin lines merge to once more become a Yang line. This linear description is simply a way of depicting the cyclical motion of the light to the dark and back again, as in the 24 hour cycle of the day.

The Trigrams

When the positions of the yang and yin lines became the main focus in viewing the trigrams, the simpler yes/no oracle fell into the background. The new system was composed of eight trigrams, which were made up of all the possible combinations of three Yang and Yin lines. Each trigram was seen to have characteristics that reflected its particular combination of Yang and Yin lines.

The first two trigrams were seen to represent the two primal forces in the Cosmos. The all-Yang trigram was seen to represent the Heaven energies, and thus came to be called *Ch'ien*, meaning “the creative force.” The all-Yin trigram was seen to represent the Earth energies, and the force of the receptive, thus came to be called *K’un*, meaning “the receptive force” and “the earth.” Their interaction was seen to manifest in the multitudinous things.

☰	☷
Ch’ien	K’un

The trigram Ch’ien was identified with the sun as the light power. Its action was outgoing and positive. “The nature ot the Creative is movement,” it is written in Book II of the *I Ching*. “Through movement it unites with ease what is divided.” Its way of moving is said to be effortless, because it moves things in their germinal and smallest phases. Since primary directions are determined during their germinal phases, further development, proceeding in accordance with the laws of nature, is therefore effortless. This trigram is also identified with the masculine principle. When this trigram is doubled, its six unbroken Yang lines are seen to represent the preeminence of the Cosmos and its laws.

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The trigram K’un was identified with the earth and also as the dark power. Its characteristics include receptivity, devotion, the yielding, the soft, and the nourishing. When this trigram is doubled, it

symbolizes the primal power of the Receptive (Earth), whose characteristic is to nourish the fruits of creativity. K’un represents both the womb-like power of the dark, and the reabsorbing of life forms back into it for regeneration. It is the second hexagram in the *I Ching*.

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The Chinese saw the eight trigrams as mirroring a mythical heavenly family, with Ch’ien and K’un being the father and mother trigrams, and the remaining six trigrams their children: three sons and three daughters. The characteristics of the sons and daughters are defined by the placement of the Yang and Yin lines within their trigrams.

The trigrams of the three sons show a single Yang line moving upward through two Yin lines. The Yang line in the bottom place creates the trigram of the eldest son, called Chen; the Yang line in the middle place creates the trigram of the middle son, called K’an; the Yang line in the top place creates the trigram of the youngest son, called Ken.

The three sons:

☳ ☵ ☶
Chen K’an Ken

A single Yin line moving upwards through two Yang lines creates the trigrams of the daughters. The Yin line in the bottom place creates the trigram of the eldest daughter, Sun; a Yin line in the middle place creates the middle daughter, Li; a Yin line in the top place creates the youngest daughter, Tui.

The three daughters:

☴ ☲ ☱
Sun Li Tui

Chen, the trigram of the eldest son, with its Yang line in the bottom place, is said to reflect the upward thrust of Yang, at its beginning; this beginning movement is seen as accompanied by thunder and lightning. When this trigram is doubled, its thrust is doubled. The hexagram, accordingly, is named *Shock (Thunder)* (Hex. 51):

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K’an, the trigram of the middle son, signifies water. It is active water, as in white water, or rushing water, falling water, and as rain. It is water at work, pushing wheels and producing energy as in hydroelectric power; therefore K’an is associated with working, or toiling, and because water unhesitatingly plunges over precipices, it is also associated with danger. In psychological terms the danger might be the collapse of our will to go on, as when we work hard and see no results; or it might be the danger of being too ambitious, causing us to act in uncontrolled and precipitate ways. In its doubled form as a hexagram it is

called *The Abysmal (Water)* (Hex. 29):

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Ken, the trigram of the youngest son, shows the Yang line at the top, near the clouds. It is the image of a mountain as a place where streams flow and birds sing, a place of solitude and serenity, a place of forests. It contains hidden treasures such as seams of coal, or gold, and it gives nourishment to all the land around because it absorbs rain and holds water that flows down to the lake, watering everything on its way. The ideal mountain is said to be one with a lake on top that continually feeds everything below. When Ken is doubled, the resulting hexagram is called *Keeping Still (Mountain)* (Hex. 52); this refers to a particular meditative state of mind:

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The trigram of the eldest daughter, Sun, has the image of wind penetrating through cracks, and of wood, as roots, penetrating through the soil; it does this by adapting to and going around obstacles. It also carries the image of the wind dispersing things, as in dispersing waves into foam. Psychologically, it is gentleness that disperses hardness and anger. The idea of penetration, coupled with gentleness, refers to the way truth gently penetrates the cracks in our mental defenses to become recognizable perceptions. The proverbial light comes on in our minds, and we understand. When the trigrams are doubled, the hexagram is called *The Gentle*, subtitled *The Penetrating (Wind)* (Hex. 57):

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Li, the trigram of the middle daughter, has the image of a flame that is dependent upon that which is burning. The flame, through its dependence and docility, gives off light. This image hints that clarity is to be attained through dependence on something greater than oneself, meaning, the Sage as our teacher, and the Cosmos as our source of help. As long as we are emotionally dependent on wrong things, we cannot see with clarity; by detaching from these wrong dependencies and clinging to Cosmic help, we attain clarity. When the Li trigram is doubled, the hexagram is called *The Clinging (Fire)* (Hex. 30):

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Tui, the trigram of the youngest daughter, has the image of a shining lake that symbolizes joyousness. It is joy associated with the quiet peacefulness of still water. Because it is also associated with autumn, the joy of harvest, and winter's approach, it is imbued with a certain melancholy. As lake water it shines and reflects as it metallic. It is also water as fog, low-lying vapor, swamp water, and stagnant water. Tui contains all the concepts of joy ranging from joy as serenity to joy as pursuit of sensual pleasure. Psychologically, its image suggests that peace and serenity are like the shining, motionless lake. Even the slightest doubt or desire imparts motion to the water, and therefore to turbulence and unrest. When the trigrams are doubled the resulting hexagram is called *The Joyous (Lake)* (Hex. 58):

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The Hexagrams

As has been shown, the hexagram structure enabled a much more complex and interesting set of possibilities than did the trigrams, by themselves. Not only did their doubling intensity their qualities, as in the eight doubled hexagrams where the same trigram is both above and below, but the hexagram lines were seen to have a progression in time. The action begins in the bottom line, progresses upward, ending in the top line.

Movement within a hexagram occurs in yet another way when we see the lines of a prospective hexagram as six empty slots that we fill by tossing the coins. Because all movement is seen as cyclical, the lines are said, theoretically, to enter the slots at the bottom, to leave them at the top, and to re-enter them again at the bottom. If we want to view the time before the present hexagram we may shift all of the lines downward one slot; the new hexagram created reflects the immediate past; a shift upward of all the lines one slot reflects the immediate future. The example of this movement occurs in *Before Completion* (Hex. 64). When all its lines are shifted upward one slot, the resulting hexagram is *After Completion* (Hex. 63). This movement demonstrates how, by making a single change, as in attitude, a transformation is made possible that lends success to one's efforts.

䷿	䷾
Before Completion	After Completion

This interpretation of the two hexagrams comes from seeing that the first, third, and fifth lines of *After Completion*, which are Yang lines, fill the first, third and fifth slots of the hexagram structure, which are said to be Yang places. Its second, fourth, and sixth lines, which are Yin lines, also fill the second, fourth, and sixth slots, which are Yin places. This hexagram is said, therefore, to be a perfectly ordered hexagram. *Before Completion*, on the other hand, with which *After Completion* is paired, shows all the lines to be in exactly the opposite places. At first glance, one might think this hexagram is in a permanent state of disorder. However, the Chinese saw its potential to shift upward as a kind of "readiness to move forward." Everything was made ready, but one key ingredient, the obtaining of Cosmic help, was lacking. Cosmic help, they recognized, is essential to all creative endeavors. By asking for that help, the lines were all made to shift upward, creating the transformation needed, in an effortless way. This interrelationship between them reminds us that each hexagram, throughout the book, is paired with another hexagram. Often the pairs have opposite configurations, but just as often, their shapes are the reverse of each other; or the trigrams are in reverse places, as in Hexagrams 7 and 8, or as in 9 and 10, their middle lines are in opposite places.

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7	8
䷈	䷉
9	10

Since the trigrams are pictures of active forces, their energies are seen to move within the hexagrams in accord with these active forces. The energies of the all-Yang trigram, *Ch'ien* (Hex. 1), are said to move

upward, toward heaven, the Yang sphere. The energies of the all-Yin trigram, *K'un* (Hex. 2), are seen to move downward toward the earth, the Yin sphere. When these trigrams are put on top of each other, the meaning, at least in some hexagrams, is obvious. In *Peace* (Hex. 11), for example (see illustration), the Heaven energy is in the bottom position and the earth energy in the top position. Since the Heaven energy moves upward and the Earth energy downward, their energies are said to come to meet each other in a complementary way. Blessing and enrichment are said to result when "Heaven and Earth come to meet one another halfway." When these trigrams stand in opposite positions, with the Heaven trigram on top and the Earth energy below, the Heaven energy moves upward without reference to the Earth energy, and the Earth energy moves downward, likewise. Neither relates to the other. The hexagram in which this configuration occurs is called *Standstill* (Stagnation) (Hex. 12).

䷊ ↓↑ ䷋ ↑↓

When *Peace* (Hex. 11) is interpreted figuratively, with human relationships in mind, the hexagram represents a situation in which people are receptive and open-minded toward each other. Through their receptivity and openness, they come to meet halfway, making it possible to achieve something. The counsel given is to make good use of the propitiousness of the time. *Standstill* (Hex. 12), on the other hand, represents a time when people are not receptive toward each other. The counsel given in this hexagram is taken from the image of things withdrawing from each other: it is propitious therefore, to withdraw and wait in an attitude that will initiate a change back toward openness and receptivity.

In addition to the placement of the trigrams, the meanings of the hexagrams were also determined by the "nuclear trigrams" that are made up by the second, third and fourth lines, and by the third, fourth, and fifth lines, respectively. Part III of the Wilhelm *I Ching* discusses how these trigrams have influenced the interpretations of the hexagrams.

The Hexagram Changing Lines

In addition to the general themes of each hexagram, each of the six lines of a hexagram has its own meaning. The significance of these lines, however, is brought into play only when the toss of the coins is either all heads or all tails.

The reason for this becomes clear when we reflect that the three heads indicate maximum Yang and three tails maximum Yin. As in an electrical circuit, the positive energy (Yang) reaches its maximum at the positive magnetic pole, then becomes negative (Yin); Yin, likewise, reaches its maximum at the negative magnetic pole, then turns back again to positive (Yang). The poles are the points of change in the cycle of change. Three heads signify the point of transition at which Yang changes to Yin. Three tails, likewise, signify the point of transition at which Yin changes to Yang. As a line in the *I Ching* says, "To know the changes, that is divine indeed." The individual lines, accessed in this way, are the primary counsel of the oracle, for they not only show the points of change, they show them in the context of time, indicating the possibilities for adapting to the situation of the moment.

Because the individual lines of a hexagram show the points of change within a hexagram, their pronouncements are the main oracular text of the *I Ching*.

The Hexagram Calendar

It might seem, in view of the above, that the interpretations of the hexagrams were taken from observing them as pairs. However, different systems seem to have been used. The following twelve hexagrams derived their interpretations as a group which was seen to reflect the cycle of the year.

The first month of the new year is represented by *Return* (Hex. 24). Here, a single Yang line is said to “enter the hexagram at the bottom” in a hexagram that was formerly all Yin lines. This single light line portrays the returning light of the sun after the winter solstice. The commentary to the hexagram says, “After a time of decay comes the turning point. The powerful light that has been banished returns.” The *I Ching* text says that this hexagram is linked with the month of the solstice (December-January).

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The second month, called *Approach* (Hex. 19), is indicated when an extra Yang, or light line, enters the hexagram from the bottom, increasing the light force, and pushing out yet another of the Yin lines at the top. Both the title and subtitle, “Becoming Great,” refers to this increase in the light power. The text says that this hexagram is associated with the months of January and February.

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The third month, represented by *Peace* (Hex. 11), is created when still another Yang line enters the hexagram from the bottom. Although this hexagram is mentioned in the *I Ching* as being associated with February-March, the three light lines on the bottom and three dark lines on the top indicate the midpoint between the winter and summer solstices; this month, therefore, would more correctly be March on the modern calendar.

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The fourth month, represented by *The Power of the Great* (Hex. 34), has four light lines. Its name is taken from the increasing power of the sun in the cycle of the year. This hexagram would correctly be associated with April.

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In the hexagram of the fifth month, five light lines occupy all but the top slot. The five light lines picture a time when all the dark lines will soon be replaced by light ones at the summer solstice. The name of this hexagram, *Breakthrough (Resoluteness)* (Hex. 43), reflects this fact. Though this hexagram is said to be associated with April-May, the correct time on our calendar would be May.

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The hexagram of the sixth month represents the summer solstice. The light Yang lines have mounted upward until all the dark Yin lines have been replaced. This hexagram is *The Creative* (Hex. 1), and it also represents the sun’s light power. This hexagram would correctly be associated with June.

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At precisely the moment when the light has reached its high point, a dark Yin line enters the bottom slot of the hexagram structure, pushing out one Yang line at the top. The seventh month is represented by *Coming to Meet* (Hex. 44). What comes to meet is the dark, Yin force. The commentary to this hexagram focuses particularly on the beginning of the Earths energies to retract within (or underground), therefore the focus of this hexagram is on decline and decay. What is in decline is the growing season. Foreshadowed is the coming dark period of the year. This hexagram is associated with June-July.

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The eighth month, represented by *Retreat* (Hex. 33), reflects the further retreat of the suns power. This hexagram is associated with July-August.

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The hexagram representing the ninth month is called *Standstill* (Hex. 12). Here three Yin lines have advanced into the hexagram from the bottom. Visually, this hexagram represents the midpoint between the summer and winter solstices, or September. “Heaven is above, drawing farther and farther away, while the earth below sinks farther into the depths.” The flowing and ebbing of the earth’s energies was a primary theme in early societies. Accordingly, the hexagrams representing the last six months of the year give counsel that accords with the time, i.e., retreat, conserve, and store up supplies to prepare for the coming time of decrease (winter).

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The tenth month, in which the dark force holds ever more sway, is represented by *Contemplation* (Hex. 22). As might be expected, this time of year (September-October), is a time for reflecting, being quiet, and doing inner work.

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In the hexagram representing the eleventh month, the Yin lines have pushed out all but the one top light line. This reflects a nearly complete breach with the light s regenerative power; therefore the hexagram is called *Splitting Apart* (Hex. 23). As the commentary says, “The Yin power pushes up ever more powerfully and is about to supplant the Yang power altogether.’’ The hexagram is associated with the months of October-November.

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The twelfth and last month in the cycle is represented by K’un, *The Receptive* (Hex. 2), in which there are only Yin, or dark lines. This hexagram pictures both the primal power of Yin in its wholeness, and also the time of the greatest winter darkness, the winter solstice. This time was regarded as “the most sacred time of the year,” because it was believed that there was a brief halt in the endlessly moving Wheel of Change. To respect this time, the emperors closed the passes and no one traveled. (See commentary to *Return*, Hex. 24.)

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9. Learning to Communicate with the Cosmos

The traditional method of building and reading the hexagrams is to consult the *I Ching* by asking a question. It is my experience, however, that regardless of what question we verbalize, the Sage's answer is directed to the deepest inner question we hold. Everyone seems to have a deep inner question. This question can be about almost anything: money problems, health problems, relationship issues. There is no question residing in the back of the mind that is too petty or too great for the Sage to answer. It considers all such questions important. The question on someone's mind who first approaches the *I Ching* may be about the *I Ching* itself, and so the Sage will answer by introducing itself as a source of help if we will but sincerely ask, and if we put aside, momentarily, our doubts. Because the Sage will answer in this way, I generally try to think about what my greatest concern is. Beyond that I ask, "Please tell me what I need to know." By the reply received I can usually tell what my most important question is. It should be noted that in answering what is inwardly important, the Sages answer may not coincide with what our intellect considers to be important. Often we can recognize the difference between these two issues only in hindsight.

Having put our question to the Sage, we use one of the several methods of consulting the *I Ching*. Of these, the commonest and easiest is to toss coins. Any coin will do, but pennies are traditional. A man in prison once wrote that not being allowed to have coins, he used buttons successfully. Pennies, having the lowest monetary value, are ideal, since they are symbolic of the primal number one, the common denominator of all other numbers and values. In this position the penny is symbolic also of simplicity and humility, attitudes that are the most highly prized by the *I Ching* and which are considered to be the most in harmony with the Cosmic Order.

Through the tossing of three coins and counting up the values that are assigned to them, either a Yang (odd) number or a Yin (even) number is received. The original Chinese instructions view the inscribed side of the Chinese coin as Yang. Since this does not relate to western coins, western writers on the *I Ching* have assigned Yang and Yin to one or another sides of the coin arbitrarily. It seems logical, however, that because Yang represents the Cosmic image a thing has before it has materialized, the head side of a coin would more correctly represent Yang. Likewise, Yin, as representing Cosmic images materialized into forms, would seem to more naturally be represented by the tail side, which generally contains pictures of objects. In any case, it is important to know, that the Sage relates to us regardless of which side we designate as Yang and in.

The number assigned to the Yang side of a coin is three; the number assigned to the Yin side is two. When the coins are tossed, the values of the sides shown are added up. For example, when three heads are thrown, the resulting number is nine, an odd number; since odd numbers are Yang, a Yang line is drawn. When two tails and a head are thrown, the resulting number is seven, also creating a Yang line. If three tails are thrown, the resulting number is six, an even number, and so a Yin line is drawn. When two heads and a tail are tossed, the resulting number is eight, thus a Yin line is drawn. As may be noted, there are only four possible numbers that may be obtained in this manner, two Yang and two Yin:

All heads, 333 = 9, a Yang line -
All tails, 222 = 6, a Yin line - -
Two heads, one tail, 332 = 8, a Yin line - -

Two tails, one head, 223 = 7, a Yang line -

The Yang and Yin lines created by each toss are placed one on top of the other until the six 'empty slots' of the hexagram structure have been filled. If, for instance, we toss three heads for the first line, it is said that we have a 'nine in the first place'. If we toss three tails for the second line, we have a 'six in the second place', and so on until all six places have been filled.

When we toss all heads or all tails, the lines created are seen to have special significance. The Yang and Yin of these lines are said to have reached their maximum points and are therefore poised to become their opposites; thus are they called 'changing lines'. They signify here the points of change in a situation are taking place. Points of change are similar to what happens when we solder one piece of metal to another. The time when the solder has attained the right heat is the only time we can change the way the metals fit together. The point of change refers to those areas of activity where it is possible to change the trajectory of our lives on the germinal level. We can see this, for instance, in observing the counsel given by the first line of *Conflict* (Hex. 6), which counsels us to cease resisting (as by arguing) the situation at hand. By halting one's habitual way of responding, one changes an overall negative trajectory (Fate) that would end destructively in the future. In reading the hexagrams, we read the general text to understand its theme, and the changing lines as our special counsel. The changing lines are to be read in the context of the hexagram as a whole. Thus, for example, in *Limitation* (Hex. 60), the action recommended in the lines generally refers to observing the correct limits that the Cosmos places on human actions.

When we toss only two heads and one tail, or two tails and one head, the numbers derived are considered to be at the midpoint between maximum and minimum Yang and Yin, and therefore are regarded as stable and unchanging. If the hexagram we develop has no changing lines, we are meant to read and contemplate only the general text of the hexagram. Sometimes people feel disappointed to receive a hexagram with no changing lines; this is because without changing lines they feel it is hard to identify what situation is being referred to; in such cases it is meant that we contemplate the hexagrams general meaning, it may be meant that we see a past situation or an upcoming one from a Cosmic perspective.

It is the custom, after reading the text and lines of the hexagram, to create a second hexagram by changing the changing lines to their opposites. The changing Yang lines are changed to Yin lines, and the changing Yin lines to Yang lines. The second hexagram created by changing these lines is said to reflect the effect of the changes, once they are made. Only the general text of this second hexagram is read, since it contains no changing lines in itself. The theme of the second hexagram is to be considered in combination with the theme and changing lines of the first hexagram.

In contemplating a hexagram and its changing hexagram, we view each as reflecting on the other. For instance, we may receive *Splitting Apart* (Hex. 23), with the second, fourth, and top lines; through changing the lines we develop the changing hexagram, *Deliverance* (flex. 40). The second line of *Splitting Apart* describes a situation in which the power of the inferiors (fear and doubt) is growing; the counsel given is that these elements must be resisted; the fourth line shows that the dark power has already peaked and had its worst effect; the top line says that the splitting apart has ended and the seed of good remains to grow anew. Given this configuration, *Deliverance* can be read as a sequence of events that will end in success (deliverance) if we but follow the counsel given by the second changing line in *Splitting Apart*. Once deliverance has come we recuperate in peace by keeping our thoughts still, meaning, we stay alert to say no to any inner voices of conflict and doubt.

Once a hexagram has been drawn, we may refer to the key that is included in most books on the *I Ching*, to obtain the hexagram's number. The upper trigram of the hexagram is looked up on the horizontal row of trigrams at the top of the key, while the lower trigram is looked up on the vertical column on the left side. The point where the vertical and horizontal columns intersect indicates the number of the hexagram.

Having drawn a hexagram, we have what might be considered the subject heading for further hexagrams we may draw at one sitting. All the hexagrams will continue to reflect on and elaborate this theme until we understand the main point of what is being said. If we misconstrue what the hexagram is talking about, it will continue on the same subject, making us rethink the matter. We may even get identical hexagrams and lines, indicating that we have not yet understood the main point of the message.

Although it is generally held that to ask the same question twice is to importune, I have found it to be of no harm if we ask to have a hexagram clarified. Importuning occurs when we doubt the answer given and persist in seeking to have our doubts verified, or if we are in a hostile or testing mood. The *I Ching* will have nothing to do with arrogance or egotism on the part of the seeker, but it will answer and carry on a conversation with our inner thoughts so long as we are sincere in trying to understand. Furthermore, while it is not to be expected that beginners can absorb more than the messages of three hexagrams at one sitting, it is important to develop enough hexagrams to allow the Sage to fully elaborate on the matter being discussed. For many years of my experience with the *I Ching,* it has seemed that six hexagrams, together with their changing hexagrams, are adequate for a complete conversation.

The replies given in a series of three or six hexagrams contain a line of thought, just as in music a line of melody is interwoven among chords and rhythmic beats. In a series of three hexagrams, for instance, the word limitation may crop up repeatedly, indicating that the point to be communicated centers around the idea of limitation. Perhaps we need to set limits on our actions, or the ideas we entertain, or perhaps it is pointing to limitations in our situation that need to be understood, or perhaps it indicates limits that we need to apply to another who is encroaching into our personal space. The limitation we need to apply may be only to say an inner no. By keeping our minds open and unstructured, we permit the line of thought to emerge intuitively as an insight.

Some writers on the *I Ching* say that a ritual is necessary to approach the Sage; they keep their *I Ching* book in a special silk case, use special Chinese *I Ching* coins, sit in a certain position, burn incense, breathe in a certain way, and so on. The text of the *I Ching*, however, indicates that humility and sincerity are the important prerequisites. A warning is given in the fifth line o*f After Completion* (Hex. 63) about the dangers of magnificence: "The neighbor in the east who slaughters an ox does not attain as much real happiness as the neighbor in the west with his small offering." The commentary says, "...inner seriousness is lacking in this show of magnificence...." The top line of *The Marrying Maiden* (Hex. 54) even warns against ritual for rituals sake: "The woman holds the basket, but there are no fruits in it. The man stabs the sheep, but no blood flows. Nothing that acts to further." The commentary explains, "At the sacrifice to the ancestors, the woman had to present harvest offerings in a basket, while the man slaughtered the sacrificial animal with his own hand. Here the ritual is only superficially fulfilled; the woman takes an empty basket and the man stabs a sheep slaughtered beforehand—solely to preserve the forms. This impious, irreverent attitude bodes no good for a marriage." Ritual, in my experience, is not necessary, but if someone engages in a simple ritual that expresses genuine respect and gratitude to the Sage, it is greeted with respect and love. If, however, a ritual is performed as an obeisance that seeks to flatter the Sage in the hope of being rewarded, such an effort will fail in its purpose. As for receiving lines in the *I Ching* that call for making a sacrifice, this refers to the relinquishing of ego ideas and images, that is, all

negative feelings and inner demands for the rectification of unjust situations. We free them from the ego's tight grasp, and let them go, as if from a cage.

A New Method of Consulting the *I Ching*

In recent years I have developed a new three-coin method of consulting the *I Ching*. The method came about after I noticed that sometimes the hexagrams I received in my daily readings seemed to be counsel for someone else. For example, I would no sooner recognize that the hexagrams did not fit my situation than I would receive a telephone call from someone who needed help, and whose situation was perfectly answered by the counsel I had received. On one of these occasions I spontaneously tossed my three pennies, asking if my counsel had been for that person. It came to mind that in answering, the heads would represent yes's and the tails no's. To my surprise, I got three heads, which I immediately saw as yes, yes, yes. Thereafter, I used this method to learn whether my hexagrams were for me, or were about someone else. I also used the method to ask, after a consultation, whether I had understood the message intended by the Sage. This practice led to astonishing results. However, because there was such a strong emphasis placed on the traditions surrounding the *I Ching,* I began to wonder whether the Sage really approved of this method. This question spurred me to go to my box of pennies and take out ten, which I then threw down with the question, "Is this method a correct way of consulting the *I Ching*?" Nine of the ten came up heads. Thereafter, I had no doubt. I interpreted the single no as saying, "it is a very good method, but it has its limits." In the following weeks, I was to learn both the great value of this method and the limits.

In the beginning, my main purpose in using the new method was to clarify the *I Ching* readings and to avoid presuming I already understood what the *I Ching* was saying. At the time, I was in the habit of relying on the interpretations I had written in my book, A *Guide to the I Ching*. These interpretations were adequate for many years and even essential to understanding the general context in which the hexagrams and lines were to be interpreted, but I began to see that the new method allowed my understanding to go beyond these interpretations, all of which were like the "handholds" one uses in climbing a rock face. Each understanding, or handhold, was valid to carry me forward to a new understanding of the Cosmic Way. That understanding, in turn, was also a handhold, sufficient for my need to understand, at the moment. It has become clear that this expanding needs to be ever expanded, as up until now, we humans have only guessed about the Cosmos and its way. Somehow, we have not developed the means to ask the Cosmos directly to define itself, as is now possible with the additional use of this three-coin method. Each time that we consult the oracle, we gain a Cosmic view of a situation that is often quite different from our conventional view. The oracle calls this view the "inner truth" of the situation.

I had also noticed, during my years of consulting the *I Ching*, that the Sage uses only pieces and parts of the text to make its message clear. This is intuitively perceived by the user, but the new method verified this intuitive perception. The new method allowed the Sage to be quite precise in indicating which part of the text was to apply at a given time, and the main point it was making. This ability, however, depended somewhat on my ability to ask the right questions. The more I worked with it, the more my ability to ask the right questions increased.

The method is this: to ask a yes/no question I take the tossing of the three coins to mean the following:

three heads = yes, yes, yes, or + + +. This is a total yes and the main point.

two heads, one tail = yes, yes, no, or + + -. This is a basic yes that can be expanded on; or, it is true, but may not be the main point the Sage wants to address.

two tails, one head = no, no, yes, or - - +. This is a basic no, or it is not the point.

three tails = no, no, no, or - - -. This is a either a total no, or "you are on the wrong track," or "you have already asked that question."

Before asking any yes/no questions, I first develop a hexagram after asking only to be guided as to what I need to know. I toss the coins for yes/no answers only to clarify what I think the Sage is trying to communicate by the hexagram received. In using this method I have found that the messages almost always concern the lines of the first hexagram, and therefore my focus tends to be on interpreting them, unless, of course, I receive a hexagram without lines. In this method I find that the second hexagram rarely applies. I often ask, "Am I to consider the second, changing hexagram in the interpretation?" (Note: A person new to the *I Ching* should always read the main text, for otherwise the context in which the lines are to be contemplated will not be understood.)

My introductory questions are about the subject: Is the hexagram about me? If not, I try to determine who it is about, and whether it is about a general or a particular situation, or about my relationship with the Sage.

My next question is about the time: I ask whether the line concerns something past, present, or future. If past, is the reading mainly to help me understand what happened? If present, am I meant only to understand it, or to do something about it? If future, I can safely assume I am being prepared to see a situation in the right context.

My next question is about the verb: If I am meant to do something, is my action an inner one, such as saying an inner no or yes to something? If it is an outer action, is it referring to withdrawing or going forward? Does going forward mean it is time to make contact, or to do anything at all?

When I think I understand what is intended I ask, "Do I understand correctly the main point intended?" If the answer is no, I seek further clarification by asking "Are you referring to this?" or "Do you mean that?" When the answer is yes, I ask again, "Is that the main point?" If it is, I then ask, "Is that all I need to know about it now?" If the answer is yes, I end my *I Ching* session.

This method has the same difficulties one has in consulting the *I Ching* generally. For example, if the Sage has already made something clear and one questions it again, one gets an opposite answer. It is advisable, therefore, to make a record ot the questions asked and the answers received, to avoid rephrasing a question already asked.

Another difficulty comes when we introduce questions that are too far off the subject that has been defined by the hexagrams we have tossed. If these questions are of an important nature, they will become clear in the conversation we develop with the Sage.

Still another problem occurs when we ask a question to which we already know the answer from our previous experience with the *I Ching*, or from our inner truth. Then we get an opposite answer. When a reply seems to be a clear contradiction of my inner truth I ask, "Have I begged the question?" If so, the reply will be "Yes." A related problem occurs when we ask about doing something we have already

decided to do. Lacking a true openness, the answer is likely to be "yes" whether it is correct to do so, or not.

For a while I was hesitant to introduce this method to beginners, in part because I believed it might be easy to develop a superficial relationship with the Sage that would lead to misunderstandings, and because the method itself would be too shocking, since it is a direct and immediate communication with the Sage. Even though we are speaking with this entity when we consult the *I Ching*, the fact that we are drawn to read a particular text somehow obscures that fact. As I was nearly finished editing this book, I received for my mornings daily guidance instruction that made me realize the Sage wanted me to include it in this book. I will give the conversation here both to demonstrate the new method, and to demonstrate the types of questions I asked to determine what the Sage was referring to. In this particular conversation, I have given the questions and answers in their exact order.

Having no particular question in mind I received the hexagram *Obstruction* (Hex. 39), with the first, third, and fourth lines changing. All three of these lines speak of "going" leading to "obstructions." My questioning was as follows: Does the phrase "Going leads to obstruction" refer to me? ++ To something I am doing? ++ In my writing? ++ Does it have to do with you, the Sage? ++ Does it have to do with a problem in my text? - -. Knowing it had been on my mind as an unresolved issue whether to include it in this text, I asked: Does it have to do with including the three-coin method in the book? +++ Do I need to research it first with you? ++ Does "going leads to obstructions" mean the readers will meet with obstruction if they do not first ask for your help? ++. To be sure I understood this as the main message I asked, "Do I understand what you are trying to say in this hexagram?" ++ Then I asked if there was a better way to phrase this and got ++. Do you mean, if the seeker does not ask for help he might get false information? +++ Does "going leads to obstruction" also mean that the seeker should not ask about something he is already convinced of? ++. I saw from this conversation that the first principle on approaching the Sage with the three-coin method is **to ask the Sage for help to understand**, otherwise the seeker will meet with obstructions. The second principle is **that he should not ask the Sage something he is already convinced of**. If we do this, the Sage will only answer Yes until we are really open-minded.

Asking if there were other kinds of obstructions I needed to know about, I got ++, so I developed the next hexagram, which was *Opposition* (Hex. 38), with the first and fourth lines changing. The first line says: "Remorse disappears. If you lose your horse, do not run after it; it will come back of its own accord. When you see evil people, guard yourself against mistakes." Do you mean, by "losing your horse," that when we do not understand a hexagram we should use this method to help understand it? ++ The fourth line says, "Isolated through opposition, one meets a like-minded man with whom one can associate in good faith. Despite the danger, no blame." Does this mean that by trusting the Sage as a "like-minded man," inner opposition is ended? ++ Does this line refer to any institutionalized inner opposition to there being a Sage with whom we can communicate? +++ Or to the idea of using the coin method? ++ Are seekers always conscious of having such an inner opposition? - -. Are you saying that to avoid danger, it is necessary that they be fundamentally open minded? ++ Is this the main point intended? +++. The third principle gleaned from this conversation was: **The three coin method will not work if the seeker has an institutionalized inner opposition or doubt of the Sage, or of the coin method itself**.

Asking then if there was more I needed to know I received +++. The next hexagram was *The Taming Power of the Small* (Hex. 9), with the second and fourth lines changing. The second line says, "He allows himself to be drawn into returning. Good fortune." The fourth line says, "If you are sincere, blood

vanishes and fear gives way. No blame." Are you saying that the method will work if the person withdraws from his opposition, once he is aware of it? ++ Is this the main point of the second line? ++ Also the fourth line? + +. The fourth principle developed in this conversation was: **The coin method will work as soon as the person recognizes and withdraws from his inner opposition**.

Asking if I need to know more about this I received ++. The words came to mind, "Return to the way," and so I asked, Is it important to warn the seeker against any kind of ego? ++ That the presence of the ego will lead to misunderstanding ++ Because the Sage will not be the one answering? +++ The seeker will only get a reflection of his own ego? +++ Should I point out the danger of only getting the answer the ego wants? +++ Does the warning also have to do with the ambitiousness of the ego, that wants to be told what to do so that it will not have to go to the trouble of looking within to see if the answer harmonizes with inner truth? ++ Is there more I need to know about that? - - This led to the fifth and sixth principles: **That using the method without displacing the ego first (becoming truly humble) will produce only answers that the ego wants to hear—a dangerous thing, and that the egos desire to be told what to do, as an easy way to avoid looking within and taking responsibility, leads to wrong answers**. Asking if this phrasing was correct, I got +++.

Without making another hexagram I asked further, because I had also observed that when my ego has been involved in the questioning, the answers disagreed with my sense of inner truth: Does one need to ask the Sage, by way of tossing the three coins, whether ones ego is involved in this way? ++ And, if so, to disregard the answers developed previously? +++ When ones ego has been involved in questioning, is it important to withdraw from questioning until, by tossing the coins, one receives clearance that one is free enough of the ego to ask again? +++ The seventh principle is: **To ask if the ego has been involved in the questioning; if so, to disregard all answers obtained while the ego has been involved; to withdraw from questioning until one is free again**.

Without giving the rest of the hexagrams and questions here, I will list the other principles developed in this session:

Principle 8. There is no harm when mistakes are made if the user frees himself of the intruding ego element and returns to a sincere attitude.

Principle 9. One may use the coin method to seek reflection of one's inner truth and to find out how one may best stay in harmony with the Cosmos.

Principle 10. Fundamental sincerity is the only thing that attracts the Sage's help.

Principle 11 .The method will work, but whenever we hold deeply fixed ideas, there will be problems in interpreting the replies.

Principle 12. The seeker needs to accept the responsibility involved in using this method, to continue questioning until he has understood the main points intended by the Sage.

Is There a Correct Age to Begin a Serious Study of the *I Ching?*

It is a Chinese tradition that one does not begin a serious study of the *I Ching* until the age of forty. Because I began consulting the *I Ching* at the age of forty one, and I know so many other people who have begun their serious study of it at ages ranging from their mid-thirties to their mid-forties, a fellow student of it and I put this question to the Sage. We received *Youthful Folly* (Hex. 4) without lines. Since this hexagram has to do with taking up one's study with the Sage, it seemed a particularly appropriate answer. With this as our basis, our questioning began:

Question: Is it too arbitrary to connect the study of the *I Ching* with a certain age? ++ Is there an optimal age? ++ Is it around forty? - - Around thirty-five? ++ Younger than that? ++ Around thirty? ++ Younger still? ++ Twenty-five? ++ Younger ++ Around twenty? ++ Younger than twenty? ++ Are you saying, whenever anyone is truly sincere? ++ Is that the point?---Does it have to do with modesty? ++ Is it fruitful to begin when people's egos are too dominant? - - Does the optimum age have to do with an attitude? ++ Are there times when we need to discourage people to use it? +++

At this point we asked if we might develop a hexagram to better understand what was being said and received ++.The hexagram was *Preponderance of the Small* (Hex 62), with the first, third, and fourth lines changing. The first line says: "The bird meets with misfortune through flying." This made us ask: Is this saying that a person should not take up the study of the *I Ching* as long as he has not exhausted his enthusiasm for the ways of the world? ++ The third line says, "If one is not extremely careful, Somebody may come up from behind and strike him. Misfortune." Are such people (who have not exhausted this enthusiasm) too self-confident? ++ Are there other points to be learned here? ++ Are such people not ready to pay attention to small and insignificant things (the theme of this hexagram)? +++ Are there dangers in approaching the Cosmos carelessly? +++ The fourth line says, "No blame. He meets him without passing by. Going brings danger. One must be on guard. Do not act. Be constantly persevering." Does "going" and "danger" here mean arrogance? ++ Does it mean that going to meet the Sage with arrogance generates Fate? +++ Does "no blame" mean that the Fate generated is correct? ++ (Note that because in this conversation the main points were indicated by +++, we did not ask, "Is this the main point?")

The conclusion we reached was that there is an optimal time to become a serious student of the Sage; it has to do not with years, but with attitude: when one is ready to pay attention humbly to small and seemingly insignificant things. Prior to that, while one is arrogantly self-assured, there is a real danger.

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